THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

Chögyam Trungpa

Volume Six

GLIMPSES OF SPACE

ORDERLY CHAOS

SECRET BEYOND THOUGHT

THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD: COMMENTARY

TRANSCENDING MADNESS

SELECTED WRITINGS



The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa

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Born in Tibet • *Meditation in Action* • *Mudra* • Selected Writings

VOLUME TWO

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THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

VOLUME SIX

Glimpses of Space

Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle

Secret Beyond Thought

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Commentary

Transcending Madness: The Experience of the Six Bardos

Selected Writings

EDITED BY
Carolyn Rose Gimian

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Page i: Chögyam Trungpa at Karmê Chöling, ca. 1971. Photographer unkown.
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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME SIX

VOLUME SIX OF *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa* brings together thoroughly tantric, or vajrayana, material on the nature of mind and space and their interaction. These are teachings that are productive to study and worthwhile to pursue, yet they include much advanced material, which can at times be frustrating and perplexing to our "normal" ways of thinking. All of these teachings were given during Trungpa Rinpoche's early years in the West. "The Bardo" is based on teachings given by Rinpoche in England in the 1960s. The remainder is from lectures in North America, the earliest from 1971, the latest from 1976. Yet, while these teachings were presented early on, most of them were not published until after his death in 1987, the exceptions being "The Bardo," the "Foreword" and "Commentary" from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and "Femininity."

Much of this material is genuinely esoteric and difficult to understand. Nevertheless, Trungpa Rinpoche presented this material in public seminars, for the most part. With the exception of one seminar that forms part of *Glimpses of Space*, he did not restrict access to these teachings, unlike his approach to much of the vajrayana material he presented to his advanced students. What makes these teachings hard to understand is not that they require a great deal of prior study of the Buddhist teachings. Based on the way that he presented the material, it is not necessary to know very much about Buddhism to grasp what he is saying. Rather, it is necessary to know something about mind or, more accurately, to be open to one's own innate or instinctual relationship with space, mind, and awareness. If one approaches these teachings with a

genuinely "open" mind, they are not much more perplexing to the neophyte than they are to the initiated.

Transcending Madness, the material from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (the translation of the text itself is not included), and "The Bardo" all present teachings on the bardos. Next in Volume Six, *Orderly Chaos* presents teachings on the principle of mandala. *Glimpses of Space* explores the principles of space and feminine energy. The little volume *Secret Beyond Thought* presents teachings on the five chakras and the four karmas. The final article in this volume, "Femininity," is a popular treatment of the feminine principle.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche presented the two seminars that make up *Transcending Madness* in 1971. The first took place in Allenspark, Colorado, about an hour outside of Boulder, and the second at Karmê Chöling, the first practice center he established in the United States, located in rural Vermont. He had barely been in North America for a year when these teachings were presented. In the introduction to Volume Three of *The Collected Works*, there is some description of the tenor of that first year, in particular relative to the chaotic but cheerful environment that surrounded Trungpa Rinpoche's life and teaching in Boulder. The first seminars that Rinpoche gave in Boulder were edited to become *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*. It was only a little while after presenting the "Cutting Through" seminars that he gave the Allenspark material, "The Six States of Bardo." It was attended by most of his students from Boulder.

In the short time since he had arrived in Boulder in the fall of 1970, he had drawn together a community of several hundred students. As Judith Lief, the editor of *Transcending Madness*, writes in her foreword to the book: "Trungpa Rinpoche had attracted many students with a background in higher education, psychology, and the arts. These early students were strongly interested in integrating their Buddhist training with their practice of Western disciplines" (p. 5). One might put it another way: Chögyam Trungpa was interested in integrating his students' Buddhist training with the practice of Western disciplines—and they were generally interested in doing whatever interested him. To be sure, he attracted many students with an impressive background in a Western discipline, whether psychology, physics, anthropology, writing, painting, publishing, business, interior design, or any of hundreds of other possibilities. However, these students were often ready to give up whatever

they were pursuing in the world in order to become meditators and spiritual practitioners. It was not then, nor is it now, uncommon to associate becoming a spiritual person with giving up the occupations of the world.

It was Chögyam Trungpa who suggested: Why don't we start a therapeutic community? Why don't we write poetry? Why don't we start a business? Once the idea caught on, the students started bringing the possibilities to him, but it was largely his initial inspiration to join together spiritual and temporal activity in this unique fashion.

Already by the fall of 1971, when the Allenspark seminar took place, a group of Rinpoche's students were working with him on plans to start a therapeutic community to work with seriously disturbed individuals.[1] Trungpa Rinpoche and Suzuki Roshi, the founder of Zen Center San Francisco, had discussed this idea in May of 1971, just a few months prior to Roshi's death. When Trungpa Rinpoche gave the Allenspark seminar and the subsequent seminar on the bardos at Karmê Chöling, one of his motivations for presenting these tantric teachings was that he felt the material could be helpful to his students in understanding and working with mental illness.

While this sounds rather straightforward, in fact it was a revolutionary move. The bardo teachings connected with the *Bardo Thödröl*, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, are advanced teachings in the dzogchen or ati tradition within the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. It was remarkable of Rinpoche to connect them with the study and application of Western psychology.

In a number of areas of his work in North America, Trungpa Rinpoche joined together the study of vajrayana Buddhism with the practice of Western disciplines, particularly in psychology and the arts. Judith Lief reports that when she arrived in Boulder in 1972, many of Rinpoche's students belonged to one of the two main "camps" within the Buddhist community: one studying psychology and another group working with theater. Both groups were working with teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche had given them, based in both cases on advanced vajrayana material. The psychology group was studying the transcripts from the two seminars that make up *Transcending Madness*. (What the theater group was doing comes up in Volume Seven.)

Although he may have connected the bardo material with Western

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1. For more information on this project, see Volume Two.

psychology, Rinpoche didn't simplify these teachings to show his students how to apply them practically. *Transcending Madness* is a precise and difficult-to-fathom presentation of the teachings of bardo as they relate to the six realms of existence. It makes its basic points very clearly, but the author didn't abbreviate when it came to the details. He was not presenting pop psychology. It requires commitment and a genuine letting go of concepts to connect with this material.

On the whole, Trungpa Rinpoche was suspicious of attempts to simplistically merge two distinct disciplines. Nor was he generally enamored of "borrowing" ideas from Eastern spirituality and applying them to Western concepts. There was a good deal of such experimentation during the 1960s and '70s, much of it well intentioned but poorly thought out or poorly executed. The results were often more like a creation in Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory than an evolutionary process. It was rare that a genuine hybrid emerged, carrying the strengths of its ancestry. Chögyam Trungpa's criticism of the problems with the New Age mentality, however, did not stop him from introducing teachings from his own lineage into the stream of Western thought and art.

A number of people who were applying very small discoveries from the East to something in the West were making bold claims about themselves and the importance of their discoveries. In contrast, Rinpoche's approach was much more understated. He didn't say, "Now I am presenting some of the most ancient and precious teachings of my lineage, and I'm going to show you how these can be practically applied in your culture. This is the first time in the history of humankind that anyone has ever done this, and it's a radical and fantastic thing to do." His method was much more subtle and ultimately much more profound. He told the people at the Allenspark seminar: "Everybody here is involved in a very dangerous game because we are working on the karmic pattern of America. We are trying not only to fight it, but we are trying to infiltrate it . . . we are working on the infiltration of the materialistic world."

Thus, *Transcending Madness* is not a how-to book about applying Tibetan bardo teachings to working with the mentally ill. It is rather a book about how to apply these teachings to one's own state of mind. The premise of Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation is that madness is not an aberration experienced by some people who have something wrong with them to begin with, people who are different from you and me. Rather, insanity is something that we all experience, although it may be

in a more embryonic form. By seeing how we work with sanity and insanity in ourselves, we can begin to understand what others are experiencing and perhaps be helpful to them.

Trungpa Rinpoche had known the psychiatrist R. D. Laing in England in the 1960s. Laing believed that there was a great deal of sanity in madness, and he and Chögyam Trungpa undoubtedly had some interesting and productive discussions on this topic. Unfortunately, there is no record of their communication, and neither man is alive to tell us about their conversations. Trungpa Rinpoche said many times that he admired Laing and respected his views, and one can only assume that this was a mutual feeling. Just as Rinpoche's interest in starting a therapeutic community came out of a dialogue with Suzuki Roshi, it is not unlikely—although there is no confirmation for this idea—that his inspiration to present the bardo teachings as applicable to Western psychology may have been influenced by his association with Laing and his ideas.

Bardo is a Tibetan word that means an "intermediate" or "in-between" state. The idea of bardo is most commonly understood in connection with teachings in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and generally people associate bardo with what occurs at the moment of death and in the after-death state. The traditional teachings on bardo speak of six bardo states, several of which are associated with the process of dying and experiences that occur after death. Other bardo states include birth, the dream state, and the state of meditation. In *Transcending Madness* and in the foreword and commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* Rinpoche stresses that these teachings are also about how we live. As Francesca Fremantle, the coauthor and translator of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, says in her introduction to the book: "The fundamental teaching of this book is the recognition of one's projections and the dissolution of the sense of self in the light of reality." In *Transcending Madness*, working with these teachings in each moment of our lives is clearly the focus.

As Trungpa Rinpoche puts it, "Everyone must go through different phases of so-called normality and so-called abnormality, such as tension, depression, happiness, and spirituality. All these phases that we go through constantly seem to be what we have been talking about in this seminar. Unless we are able to apply this to everyday life, there is no point to it" (p. 139).

In her foreword to the book, Judith Lief clarifies the meaning of bardo and how it relates to the six realms of existence, the fundamental

framework that Trungpa Rinpoche uses in presenting the material in *Transcending Madness.* "This volume . . . is based on the interweaving of two core concepts: realm and bardo. The traditional Buddhist schema of the six realms—gods, jealous gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings—is sometimes taken to be a literal description of possible modes of existence. But in this case the schema of the six realms is used to describe the six complete worlds we create as the logical conclusions of such powerful emotional highlights as anger, greed, ignorance, lust, envy, and pride. Having disowned the power of our emotions and projected that power onto the world outside, we find ourselves trapped in a variety of ways and see no hope for escape."

She continues: "The six realms provide a context for the bardo experience, which is described as the experience of no-man's-land. The bardos arise as the heightened experience of each realm, providing at the same time the possibility of awakening or of complete confusion, sanity or insanity. They are the ultimate expression of the entrapment of the realms. Yet it is such heightened experience that opens the possibility of the sudden transformation of that solidity into complete freedom or open space" (pp. 6–7).

As Lief also states, Chögyam Trungpa "presented teachings on the realms and bardos as a way of understanding madness and sanity and learning to work directly and skillfully with extreme states of mind. Based on direct observation of mental patterns, these teachings provide a way 'to see our situation clearly along with that of our fellow human beings'" (p. 6).

In terms of mental illness in others, there are important implications that arise from this view of madness and sanity as intertwined or coexisting in us all the time. For one, the preparation for working with disturbed individuals is first of all to work on oneself and to understand sanity and madness within one's own state of mind. Because we don't regard mental illness as something alien, it is not something to fear. In fact, it is quite familiar ground. We realize that we have the ability to understand what other people are experiencing and to relate directly with them in their pain and confusion, because their state of mind is also part of our own experience. This teaching becomes a powerful tool to build identification and compassion in working with others. Judith Lief has shown this in her own work with dying people, which she describes

in her book *Making Friends with Death: A Buddhist Guide to Encountering Mortality.*

Having presented a seminar on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* at Karmê Chöling in the Summer of 1971, Trungpa Rinpoche gave the seminars that form *Transcending Madness* in quick succession that fall. He gave one other seminar on the teachings from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* in the summer of 1972 at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. That was the last seminar he taught on the bardos. When he originally presented these talks, there were perhaps as many as two hundred people in the audience at each seminar, with many overlaps from one seminar to the next. All together, perhaps five hundred individuals heard these teachings directly. A few hundred more may have read the transcripts over the course of the next fifteen years. The material in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* of course has reached a large audience, but it is only since 1992, with the publication of *Transcending Madness* twenty years after the original talks were given, that most of the material on the bardos has been widely available. The majority of students who studied with Chögyam Trungpa, who encountered him well after 1971, may never have studied this material or even known of its existence.

Between 1970 and 1976, Trungpa Rinpoche taught more than three hundred seminars, some of them consisting of ten to fifteen talks, in which he presented the principles behind many important tantric teachings he had received in Tibet. The role of the Trungpa Tulku lineage in preserving the teachings of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is an excellent example of the preciousness of the material that he transmitted in the early days in America. In his foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* he writes: "The *Bardo Thödröl* is one of a series of instructions on six types of liberation. . . . Padmasambhava buried these texts in the Gampo hills in central Tibet. . . . Many other texts and sacred objects were buried in this way in different places throughout Tibet, and are known as terma, 'hidden treasures.' Padmasambhava gave the transmission of power to discover the termas to his twenty-five chief disciples. The bardo texts were later discovered by Karma Lingpa, who was an incarnation of one of these disciples. . . . Karma Lingpa belonged to the Nyingma tradition but his students were all of the Kagyü tradition [to which Chögyam Trungpa belonged]. He gave the first transmission of the six liberation teachings to Dödul Dorje, the thirteenth Karmapa, who in turn gave it to Gyurme Tenphel, the eighth Trungpa. This transmission was kept

alive in the Surmang monasteries of the Trungpa lineage, and from there it spread back into the Nyingma tradition" (p. 269).

Thus, Trungpa Rinpoche's lineage and his monastery, Surmang, were instrumental in the preservation and the propagation of this material, which was transmitted personally to him as a precious inheritance, starting when he was eight years old. It is remarkable that he trusted Westerners with this material, especially in those first years that he taught in America. This is typical, however, of the confidence he had in Western students to receive, preserve, and transmit the heart teachings of his lineage.

He presented all of this material in a way that was "self-secret." He was always careful not to give away tantric secrets, particularly by presenting material too soon or to an inappropriate audience. In the early 1970s, he did not expect or want people to undertake advanced vajrayana practices. Until 1973, the main practice for all of his students in America was the sitting practice of meditation. Then, beginning with the first Vajradhatu Seminary in that year, he began to introduce the preliminary practices of the ngöndro to a small group of students. The number of students involved in tantric practice grew slowly over the years.

However, in the early 1970s, partially because people were *not* engaged in vajrayana practice at this stage, he was able to present many of the principles of vajrayana and many significant teachings in a way that flew in under the radar of people's conceptual minds. He just bypassed the normal circuits in people's minds with this material. They knew that something extraordinary was being said and taking place, but in general they didn't grasp its depth, not having the tools or the training to do so. Nevertheless, the teachings left an imprint on people, which for some allowed them to keep a kernel of this material in their minds over the years. The seeds he planted in people drew them back to this material many years later and led, for example, to the editing and publication of a book such as *Transcending Madness* following his death.

There are many other seminars from this period that remain unpublished, unedited, and in many cases untranscribed. These are teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche gave to the West as a precious treasure of knowledge and wisdom. The publication of early material was one of the inspirations for Shambhala Publications to launch the Dharma Ocean Series, in which *Transcending Madness* and many other titles based on early teachings appear. The series has proven to be a great vehicle for making

this material available, and hopefully there will be many more volumes to come. Additionally, Vajradhatu Publications—the publishing arm established in the mid-1970s by Rinpoche within his own association of meditation centers—has taken on a role in editing and making available many of the early seminars. Several books published by Vajradhatu appear in Volume Six. This publishing program is certainly related to the fact that Judith Lief has been heading up Vajradhatu's editorial efforts since 1989. She continues to focus much of her editorial energy on the early seminal teachings given by Chögyam Trungpa.

The earliest days in the Vajradhatu Buddhist community coincided with a time in North America when young people were often unkempt, undisciplined, and revolutionary. Many were exploring Eastern spirituality; some were protesting the war in Vietnam and the corporate culture in America; some were dropping acid and dropping out—a well-known story. The Buddhist community was no exception to all this, and the "scene," as it was called in those days, reflected all of these elements. Looking back on this period, there may be slight embarrassment on the part of those who were part of the scene, although a twinge of nostalgia is also likely to arise. For those who came later, there may be a tendency to dismiss the formative period as childish and misguided at best. It would be unfortunate, however, to dismiss the teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche gave during this period. The students may have been naive and untamed; the teachings he gave were not.

When one sees photographs or films from this era, Rinpoche's audiences often appear disheveled. Nevertheless, they were a remarkably intelligent group, amazingly tuned in to what he was teaching, even though they may not have grasped the inner meaning. This simultaneous understanding and ignorance may sound contradictory, but it is not uncharacteristic of Rinpoche's effect on people. In many teaching situations throughout the time he taught in North America, he was able to evoke the interest and intellect of his audience and to inspire them, almost beyond themselves. If one listens to the questions and answers from these early seminars, one sees how penetrating and precise the discussions were. There was the occasional question about astral projection or auras that completely missed the mark, but by and large people were engaged and open to what he was teaching, although not fully aware of its deeper significance.

Since Rinpoche's death, there has been an effort to archive and

preserve recordings and transcripts of all of his teachings, particularly this early material. There are more than five thousand audio recordings of his talks, which are now housed in the Shambhala Archives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the international headquarters of the Buddhist organization he founded. Presciently enough, on his part, from the time that he arrived in the United States, Rinpoche requested that all of his lectures be taped. Most of the recordings are of high quality, both in terms of the tape and equipment that were used and the skill of the volunteer recording "engineers." Nevertheless, audio tape does not last a long time. There are now significant problems with many of the original recordings, and there is an ongoing effort to transfer the material to new media. In the future, many important and unique teachings should emerge from this treasury of dharma.

Trungpa Rinpoche did not like to repeat himself too many times. Once when I was working with him on a book, I asked if he would dictate material on a topic for a chapter. "Haven't I already done that?" was his reply. With a little research, I found that he had indeed presented the material I needed in an earlier seminar. He trusted that I would find what I needed. Similarly, in this case, having presented the bardo teachings in 1971 and 1972, he didn't feel the need to present them again. I'm sure he expected his students to rediscover them at the appropriate time.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo was, as noted above, the result of the collaboration between Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa. She was a Sanskrit scholar who first met Trungpa Rinpoche in England in the 1960s. In an interview she said, "I was translating a Buddhist tantra and was having a lot of difficulties with it. So, that led to my meeting Trungpa Rinpoche."[2] From that initial meeting, she recognized Rinpoche as her teacher and began studying with him. He suggested that they work together on a new translation of the *Bardo Thödröl*. She reports:

> When the Vidyadhara first suggested translating the *Bardo Thödröl* I was not very enthusiastic about the idea. I had not been particularly attracted to it by the only translation available at that time [the original English version translated by Kazi Dawa-Samdup and edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, commonly known as the Evans-Wentz transla-

2. *Shambhala Review* 4, no. 5 (March/April 1976).

tion]; in fact I don't think I had even managed to get through the whole book. But in 1971 Rinpoche gave a seminar directly based on the text, as well as two others on closely related themes [the bardo seminars], which revealed it in a completely new light. As he explained the bardo teachings, it became clear that this text was very close to his heart, and as it had already been translated into English, he particularly wanted a more accurate version to be made available. That seminar became the basis of his commentary to the *Bardo Thödröl* in our 1975 publication, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The tapes of his talks were transcribed and the subject matter was slightly condensed and rearranged, but it was edited very lightly, as I wanted to preserve his unique way of expressing himself as far as possible.[3]

In 2002 Shambhala Publications published another volume by Francesca Fremantle on the teachings from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In *Publishers Weekly*'s review of her new book, *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the* Tibetan Book of the Dead, the reviewer comments: "The 1975 version of Padmasambhava's original eighth-century text, translated by Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa, strengthened a bridge between Tibetan Buddhism and the West." At the time of publication it was a groundbreaking translation, and it made these teachings accessible to a much broader audience. If Francesca Fremantle, a Sanskrit scholar, had trouble relating to the original translation, one can imagine the difficulties it posed for the average reader. This is not to denigrate the original effort; Evans-Wentz deserves recognition for his great contributions in bringing sacred texts from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition into the Western language. Nevertheless, a new translation was needed and appreciated.

Trungpa Rinpoche had worked on translations from the Tibetan with a number of students in England before coming to North America.[4]

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3. "Reminiscences on Translating *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* with Trungpa Rinpoche," communication to Carolyn Rose Gimian, December 2001.

4. In the introduction to Volume Five of *The Collected Works*, there is a discussion of Rinpoche's collaboration with Richard Arthure on the translation of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, quite remarkable in that Richard did not speak any Tibetan! In Volume One, there is mention of the work that Rinpoche did in England with Rigdzin Shikpo, then known as Michael Hookham, and a group of scholarly minded students. The article "The Bardo," which appears in Volume Six, was edited by Rigdzin Shikpo. To this day, few of the early translations done in England have been published.

However, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was the first translation that Rinpoche worked on which was published as a book, and it remains the most influential, in terms of the size of its readership.

The Evans-Wentz translation was associated in the 1960s and early '70s with the "psychedelic" movement in the United States. Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, better known as Ram Dass, felt that the "visions" described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* had similarities to the "visions" experienced by people under the influence of psychedelic drugs.[5] The new translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* did much to dispel the idea of the bardo states as extreme hallucinations or states distant from everyday experience. Rinpoche and Francesca Fremantle's approach to the text brought these teachings into the realm of how life is lived day to day and how confusion and awareness interact in our minds all of the time. The earlier comments on *Transcending Madness* discuss the central role of the bardo teachings in the Trungpa lineage. Rinpoche—as a custodian of these teachings through many lifetimes—had strong reasons to want to see a genuine understanding of this text in the West. It must have been something of a shock to him to see the sacred teachings of his lineage expropriated as aids to psychedelic explorations. In characteristic fashion, he didn't attack this approach head on; he simply took the discussion to another, more profound level, rendering the earlier views largely irrelevant.

To help in the preparation of the introductions to *The Collected Works*, Francesca Fremantle sent me some information on her work with Trungpa Rinpoche, a few lines of which were quoted above. She had this to say about their work together:

> For our work on the text itself, I would prepare a draft translation, and then we would go through it together. We did not have time to cover the whole text in detail, but I would ask him about anything that seemed difficult or especially important. Any mistakes are en-

5. An interesting and rather offbeat development connected with this was the use of psychedelics by Stanislav Grof and Joan Halifax Grof in working with terminally ill patients. The Grofs taught at the Naropa Institute in 1975. There is a video tape of a panel in which Stanislav and Joan Grof present their work alongside Chögyam Trungpa and David Rome, Rinpoche's private secretary. Rinpoche's earthy and direct discussion of death and dying stands in stark contrast to the energetic but highly confused presentation made by the Grofs.

tirely my responsibility, as it means that I did not identify them as problems that should have been brought to his attention. We came across several idiomatic phrases and words that are not found in dictionaries or that are used here in unusual ways. There are also certain words that have special meanings in the context of the iconography of tantric deities. Apart from these examples, Rinpoche's help was particularly valuable in some of the descriptive passages, where colloquial expressions occur, conveying vivid impressions of light, colour, texture and sound.

Most of our time was spent in discussing how best to translate technical terms. This was always fascinating and a wonderful opportunity to hear him talk about dharma in the most profound and illuminating way. . . . Rinpoche had very strong views on the translation of dharma terms, but at the same time he was always open to suggestions; after all, he was continually enriching his own knowledge of English. He loved language, whether it was Tibetan, Sanskrit or English, and always approached it with the sensitivity of a poet. He often played with words, delighting in synonyms, puns, and allusions (he used to do this occasionally with Tibetan words, too, although hardly anyone in his audience was aware of what he was up to!). He was determined to avoid language that suggested a theistic approach, and equally any kind of theosophist or new age syncretism. He also disliked the lavish use of capital letters common in spiritual writing, which, he felt, gave the same kind of impression. In his later work with the Nalanda Translation Committee, he formulated these principles even more clearly. All of this arose from his wish to present Buddhism as simple, ordinary and straightforward: the expression of basic sanity.

We had many long and passionate discussions about various words, but I cannot remember any serious disagreements at the time; somehow we always managed to reach a decision we could both accept. This does not mean that I have not had second thoughts over the years, and there are certain terms that I would now translate differently. If I had the chance to ask his opinion, I feel sure that he would consider them all carefully and might agree at least to some of them. But there are remarkably few such cases, and I am continually struck by the precision and profundity of Rinpoche's interpretations and his intuitive way with a language that was not his own. Many of the terms that he first introduced in his talks and translations

have been widely adopted, and he has had an enormous influence on the way Buddhism, especially vajrayana, has subsequently been expressed in English.[6]

In the introduction to Volume Two of *The Collected Works*, there is a discussion of how Chögyam Trungpa chose to present the Buddhist teachings in the West in the language of psychology rather than the language of religion. In her introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Fremantle goes into this phenomenon:

> It is noticeable that several of the words which best express the teachings of Buddhism are part of the language of contemporary psychology, for the attitudes of certain schools of Western psychology often come closer to Buddhism than do those of Western philosophy or religion. . . . Concepts such as conditioning, neurotic patterns of thought, and unconscious influences seem more appropriate in this book than conventional religious terms. In the Commentary, words such as *neurosis* and *paranoia* are used to describe not pathological conditions but the natural results of this [ego's] fundamental state of mind. [1975, p. xvi]

The basic understanding of bardo presented by Rinpoche in his commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is the same view that is presented in *Transcending Madness*. In the opening passages of the commentary, Trungpa Rinpoche writes:

> There seems to be a fundamental problem when we refer to the subject of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The approach of comparing it with the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point, which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in this life. One could refer to this book as 'The Tibetan Book of Birth.' . . . It is a 'Book of Space.' Space contains birth and death; space creates the environment in which to behave, breathe and act; it is the fundamental environment which provides the inspiration for this book. . . . *Bardo* means gap; it is not only the interval of suspension after we die but

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6. "Reminiscences on Translating *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* with Trungpa Rinpoche," communication to Carolyn Rose Gimian, December 2001.

> also suspension in the living situation; death happens in the living situation as well. The bardo experience is part of our basic psychological makeup. [pp. 271–272]

From this basic premise, Rinpoche goes on to discuss the six realms of confused existence, which appear and beckon to us in the bardo at the same time as peaceful deities appear, representing the principles of the five wisdoms, or the five buddha families. The choice is always between ego's entanglements and the freedom of the egoless state, which is both irritating and terrifying from the viewpoint of ego. Trungpa Rinpoche also details the visions, or experiences, of the wrathful deities that arise in the bardo after death. He repeatedly relates the after-death state to the energies and the challenges that we face in life—after all, he says, we have suppressed or lost our memory of the state between death and rebirth, so it is speculation to discuss it. Yet he also lets these teachings speak for themselves, without psychologizing. He conveys the terrifying vividness of these experiences. His commentary lets the reality of the bardo speak for itself in its naked array. At the same time, Rinpoche shows us that the best preparation for death is in how we live our lives.

Rinpoche concludes the commentary with a discussion of relating compassionately and directly to a dying person. The publication of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was one of the forces that helped to transform the field of working with death and dying within the Western psychological and medical realms. When the translation was first published, there was very little being offered in the way of hospice or other services for the terminally ill. This translation was one of many factors that helped to open up the whole discussion of dying and helped to make death less of a taboo. This was clearly one of Chögyam Trungpa's wishes for this book. In his foreword, he discusses his own training, which included visiting dying people four times a week. He speaks of the beneficial effects of being in close, continual contact with the process of death, "so that the notion of impermanence becomes a living experience rather than a philosophical view" (p. 270).

Francesca Fremantle has continued to work with these teachings for many years. Although she describes herself as having taken a long vacation from this material before embarking on her recent book, *Luminous Emptiness,* it is clear that neither these teachings nor her strong connection with Trungpa Rinpoche were ever far from her heart. In the remi-

niscences that she sent me to help prepare this introduction, she included a very touching story connected with her work on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It seems fitting to end the discussion of the book with that story:

> Undoubtedly the biggest problem in working on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was the difficulty of making time for our meetings in Rinpoche's schedule. At one point, when our deadline was approaching, I became so frustrated at yet another cancelled appointment that I burst into tears and had a fit of hysterics over the telephone; I told him that if he was not interested enough to finish the translation, I would take it with me to India and find someone else to help me. I don't know which of us was more shocked by this outburst, but it got results! Emissaries were sent to calm me down, and within the next few weeks Rinpoche found the time to complete our work.
>
> As a postscript to these reminiscences, I did indeed go to India (although not as a result of my threat) before the final draft of the book was finished. There someone advised me to visit Khunu Rinpoche, a very great scholar and yogin who was renowned for his knowledge of the bardo teachings. I was extremely fortunate to meet him at that time, as he died about two years later. He immediately solved a couple of remaining problems, and spoke of the bardo deities in a most fascinating way, as though he knew them all intimately. But what impressed me most was his reaction to hearing news of Rinpoche. His face lit up with such a mixture of joy, love and devotion that I felt impelled to give him the photograph I carried everywhere with me. He pressed it to his forehead, murmuring "Trungpa Rinpoche, Trungpa Rinpoche!" over and over again. It was extraordinarily touching to see this display of emotion, especially towards a much younger man, from such a great lama.[7]

How fortunate for all of us that Francesca Fremantle persevered in her translation work with Chögyam Trungpa. Together they created a translation that has stood the test of time; and, just as important, she helped to provide the space in which Trungpa Rinpoche could present these incomparable teachings to a greater world.

The final material on the bardo states in Volume Six is an article enti-

7. Ibid.

tled "The Bardo," which was published originally under the title "The Nyingma Teachings on the Intermediate State" in England in the late 1960s or early 1970s in the journal *Creative Space*.[8] Rigdzin Shikpo, who worked with Rinpoche on this material in England in the '60s, reports that the article is "edited from various others I worked on with Rinpoche: these include 'The Way of Maha Ati,' another on breaking away from the primordial ground, another on Maha Ati terminology, yet another on the yangti dark retreat, something on the bardo itself, how to meditate in relation to it, etc." He has also described it, in an earlier e-mail, as "a bringing together of two other texts, 'Emergence from the Alaya,' and 'Bardo and the Alaya.'" It contains some material similar to the commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* but with a slightly different emphasis. It expands the understanding of bardo as a *practice* that one can do in the here and now, and relates the bardo states very directly to how we create ego and confusion on the spot in every moment of existence. This article has not been available in published form for many years; its inclusion here will be welcomed by many readers. For its publication in *The Collected Works*, Rigdzin Shikpo kindly went over his original notes from his work with Trungpa Rinpoche and prepared a definitive and new version of the material.

The next book included in Volume Six is *Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle*. This too is based on early material presented by Trungpa Rinpoche, in this case during two seminars at Karmê Chöling in 1972 and 1974. Rinpoche established this rural center as an intensive practice environment for his students. Students living on the East Coast traveled frequently to Tail of the Tiger, as it was called in the early days, to attend Rinpoche's seminars there. Many students came to Karmê Chöling for a week or a month of intensive practice, and there were also facilities for solitary retreats. In the early days, seminars in the summer took place in a tent outside the main house. In the winter, small seminars were held in the original small farmhouse on the land; larger gatherings took place in a rented hall in Barnet, the nearest town. A major renovation in 1975 and '76 added additional living quarters and several shrine rooms, including a main shrine hall—also used for lectures—that can accommodate several hundred people. However, when the seminars that make up *Orderly Chaos* took place, these facilities did not yet exist.

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8. Only a photocopy of this article has been preserved in the Shambhala Archives, and this editor has been unable to obtain definite information on the date it was published.

In addition to the "city people" who came to Karmê Chöling, there was a core of students in residence. In many respects, it was the closest thing to a monastery within the Buddhist community that Rinpoche established. It was not monastic in the sense that people wore robes or took vows of poverty, abstinence, or silence. Rather it provided a very tight and intense container in which people lived, practiced, and studied. The environment was not particularly seductive; it was in fact a claustrophobic situation, yet people became processed and tamed by living and practicing there, often in a much shorter time than in most ordinary living situations.

Each place that Rinpoche taught had its particular quality, which flavored his teaching there. When he taught at Karmê Chöling, he had a "captive" audience. There was a quality of attentiveness on the audience's part and a sense of mutual communication, almost on an instinctual level. People seemed to grasp what he was saying faster and more directly, noticeably "clicking" to what he was talking about. The seminars that he gave at Karmê Chöling were often more in-depth and reflective. In the questions and answers in *Orderly Chaos,* he and the audience members often seemed to finish one another's sentences, as though they were very much on the same wavelength.

In both *Orderly Chaos* and *Transcending Madness,* Trungpa Rinpoche seems to embody the material when he presents it. There is a way in which both of these books defy attempts to logically understand the material in an ordinary, sequential fashion. In *Transcending Madness* one feels oneself going through highlights of the bardos and the realms as one progresses through the book. Judith Lief reported to me that the tendency of this particular material to embody itself was very hard on her family while she was editing the book![9] In *Orderly Chaos,* one finds oneself in a world with no straight lines to connect things. Understanding and insight are possible, but only if one drops the reference points usually applied to "studying" or "reading" a book. This quality may frustrate some readers, but for others it will provide an experiential glimpse of the material that is being discussed.

Mandala is a Sanskrit word with many meanings. Literally, it refers to anything circular, a globe, or a wheel, and it also means a collection, group, society, or organization. Commonly, when people think of a

9. E-mail communication from Judith Lief to Carolyn Rose Gimian, February 2002.

mandala, they think of a circular drawing or a diagram that shows the arrangement of various deities, symbols, or energies. Many thangka paintings depict the mandalas, the palaces or environments, of vajrayana deities. There are also three-dimensional mandalas, or models. Both thangkas and three-dimensional mandalas show the details of a particular vajrayana deity's palace and iconography as an aid to visualization. In addition to its association with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the term *mandala* has also been applied to similar representations in other spiritual traditions. The usage of mandalas in the Hindu religion is quite ancient, and undoubtedly predates their use in tantric Buddhism. Mandala-like representations are also found within various Native American traditions. The term has also been applied to some abstract and semi-abstract modern paintings. Many of these paintings were an outgrowth of the psychedelic movement in the 1960s and '70s, after people first came into contact with Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist mandalas and thought that they were visions or artistic expressions, failing to understand their relationship to Hindu tantra or the practice of vajrayana Buddhism. Trungpa Rinpoche distinguishes between any of these approaches to mandala as symbolism and the understanding of mandala as the principle of orderly chaos. It is the latter that is the focus of *Orderly Chaos*.

Mandala principle is about how both confusion and wisdom manifest in a pattern. The pattern of orderly chaos describes both the patterns of confused, or samsaric, existence and the patterns of enlightened awareness. More fundamentally, it is about the space that underlies all experience and how it operates in terms of energy and form. The first seminar in *Orderly Chaos* was originally entitled "The Mandala of Unconditioned Being." Here, Rinpoche approaches the subject of mandala from the point of view of the mandala of samsara, or the mandala of confused existence. As he says, "We should discuss the idea of orderly chaos, which is the mandala principle. It is orderly, because it comes in a pattern; it is chaos, because it is confusing to work with that order. The mandala principle includes the mandala of samsara and the mandala of nirvana, which are equal and reciprocal. If we do not understand the samsaric aspect of mandala, there is no nirvanic aspect of mandala at all" (p. 305). It is only in the last two talks of the seminar, chapters 6 and 7, that he introduces the buddha mandala, or the principle of the mandala of enlightenment.

In the second seminar, originally titled "Mandala of the Five Buddha

Families," Rinpoche talks about the principle of mandala in terms of the energy that arises from the basic ground of unconditioned space, taking the form of the five buddha families or five buddha principles. These have both a confused and an awake aspect. He describes them as "aspects of the basic totality that accommodates things and allows them to happen. So it is not so much a matter of five separate buddha qualities; rather there are five aspects of the totality. We are talking about one situation from five different angles" (p. 358). The five families are buddha, vajra, ratna, padma, and karma. There is an excellent discussion in *Journey without Goal*[10] of the quality, symbolism, and significance of all five families, which are basically different qualities of energy, emotion, and wisdom that arise within oneself and can also be experienced in our perception of the world. Here, in *Orderly Chaos*, Rinpoche presumes the reader's basic familiarity with the buddha families. In discussing the buddha mandala, he describes how they are related to the five skandhas, not so much in terms of the skandhas as the constituents or building blocks of ego but from the perspective of confusion transmuted into the wisdom of the five buddhas.

Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and EVAM, edited by Judith L. Lief, was published in 1999 by Vajradhatu Publications. It consists of two seminars given by Chögyam Trungpa in 1975 and 1976. As the subtitle implies, the first seminar is on the feminine principle, the second on the principle of EVAM. In the Tibetan Buddhist teachings, space is understood as the feminine principle. Understanding what is meant by space altogether is part of the reader's challenge in reading this book. Again, as with *Transcending Madness* and *Orderly Chaos*, the material is not entirely linear. At times, it seems as though space itself is speaking or presenting itself, which is highly disconcerting. Trungpa Rinpoche tells us: "We are not talking about outer space. We are talking about that which is—that which *isn't*, at the same time." Various aspects of the feminine principle are presented: space as the mother principle; the feminine attributes of space as unborn, unceasing, with a nature like sky; and finally, the feminine manifested in the dakini principle, or *prajnaparamita*, the principle of space as a playful consort who gives birth to wisdom and to all the buddhas.

The second seminar presents both the feminine and the masculine

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10. See Volume Four.

principles and how they come together in the nondual experiences of bliss and wisdom. This is not a gender study. Rather, the book is an investigation of masculine and feminine qualities or principles that exist in all experience. The title of the second seminar, "EVAM," is a Sanskrit word that means "thus." The beginning of every sutra, or discourse by the Buddha, begins with the phrase "evam maya shrutam," which means "Thus I have heard." In Vajrayana Buddhism, EVAM represents the union of the feminine and masculine principles, the container (E) and what is contained (VAM). A monogram of the word *evam* is employed as one of the seals of the Trungpa tulkus (see illustration on page 466). It had a very personal meaning for Chögyam Trungpa, the eleventh incarnation of the Trungpa lineage. He always wore a signet ring with the symbol evam on it, and a gold-leafed carving of the evam symbol hung above his head when he taught from a traditional Tibetan throne in the main shrine hall in Boulder, Colorado.

Next we have *Secret Beyond Thought: The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas*, a small volume published by Vajradhatu Publications in 1991. This contains two talks on the principles of the chakras and the karmas, which are teachings from the tantric tradition of Buddhism. *Chakra* is a Sanskrit word that means "wheel." In the practice of both Hindu and Buddhist tantra, the chakras refer to psychophysical centers of energy in the body. While acknowledging this understanding of the chakras, Trungpa Rinpoche suggests that we can relate the chakras to both everyday life and "to their essence in the universe, the cosmos." The second talk discusses the four karmas, or enlightened actions, that are associated with yogic activity. These are actions that are appropriate to situations, rather than imposed on them. They are pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying. Rinpoche also discusses the obstacles, or maras, that arise in connection with realizing each of the four karmas. Karma here, which simply means "action," is quite distinct from the usual understanding of karma as the chain of cause and effect. As Rinpoche says, "there are two types of karma, which could be called greater karma and lesser karma. Greater karma is these four types of karma, which are deliberate, which do not involve chain reactions any more, because the whole purpose of greater karma is to break the chain reaction. It is applied to action in the moment, on the spot. The other karma is the chain reaction process, or lesser karma" (p. 542). As always, he recommends the sitting practice of meditation as the starting point for working with

these teachings. The seminar on which this book was based was given in Boston, Massachusetts, in February 1971, another example of the advanced level of teaching he was presenting to the public in his earliest days in North America.

Volume Six ends with the article "Femininity," which originally appeared in *Woman: Maitreya 4*, published by Shambhala Publications in 1973.[11] By far the most accessible piece in this entire volume, it is a rather lighthearted and playful article about feminine energy and its role in the Buddhist teaching. Trungpa Rinpoche pays homage to the feminine principle as the mother and consort of the buddhas, as the source of inspiration, and as a playful but very powerful maiden. He touches on the limitations of the cultural attitudes toward women in the early development of Buddhism, and ends with the statement that "as long as you respect your manhood or your womanhood, your masculinity and femininity will be an integral part of your being on the spiritual path."

With the end of Volume Six, we also come to the end of the presentation of the strictly Buddhist teachings in *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*. The remaining two volumes take us into the realms of dharma art and the Shambhala path of warriorship, not unrelated to Buddhism but presenting distinct areas of his work. In these six volumes, we have seen Trungpa Rinpoche already in many guises: In Volume One he is a biographer of his own life, in *Born in Tibet*; a humble Buddhist teacher, in *Meditation in Action;* and a yogi poet in *Mudra*. In Volume Two he manifests as meditation master and teacher of compassion, in *The Path Is the Goal* and in *Training the Mind*, and as psychologist, educator, and ecumenical pastor, among his many roles in the articles included in that volume. Volume Three shows us Trungpa Rinpoche the pioneer, bringing a new view of the Buddhist teachings and a new language of Buddhism to the West, through his best-selling volumes *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* and *The Myth of Freedom*. In Volume Four we see him once again mapping out new territory and establishing the ground to present the tantric journey in *Journey without Goal*, *The Dawn of Tantra*, and *The Lion's Roar*. In Volume Five we see him as devoted child of the

11. The Maitreya series was inaugurated by Shambhala Publications in the early 1970s as a forum to present short offerings from many of its authors. Each volume had a different theme. Chögyam Trungpa's article "Spiritual Farming" from *Gardening: Maitreya 3* appears in Volume Two of *The Collected Works*. His article "Relationship" from *Relationship: Maitreya 5* appears as part of *The Heart of the Buddha* in Volume Three.

lineage, bringing the stories of his ancestors and heritage to Western practitioners, in *Crazy Wisdom, Illusion's Game, The Life of Marpa the Translator* and *The Rain of Wisdom.* In this volume, we will see him as master of space and as master of the teachings that join life and death in nondual awareness.

There is much more to come, not only in the remaining volumes of this series but in the many volumes that will be produced in years to come. As far as the Buddhist aspect of his teachings is concerned, it will be many generations before we have the *complete* teachings of Chögyam Trungpa.

> By this merit, may all attain omniscience.
> May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.
> From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness, and
>   death,
> From the ocean of samsara, may we free all beings.[12]

CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN
April 19, 2002
Trident Mountain House
Tatamagouche Mountain,
Nova Scotia

12. Dedication of Merit, translated from the Tibetan by the Nālandā Translation Committee. Used (with a slight alteration) by permission.

Transcending Madness

The Experience of the Six Bardos

EDITED BY

Judith L. Lief

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JUDITH L. LIEF
Editor

Editor's Foreword

IN 1971, THE VIDYADHARA, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, gave three seminars in rapid succession on the topic of the six realms, the bardo experience, and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, one in Colorado and the other two in Vermont. At a time when there was great fascination with the notion of reincarnation and life after death, Trungpa Rinpoche emphasized the power of these teachings as a way of pointing to the traps and opportunities of present experience, rather than as fodder for intellectual speculation. At that time, he was also working on a translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which he described as a detailed and sophisticated map displaying the potential of confusion and awakening in each moment of experience. These three seminars, two of which form the body of this book, were to be pivotal in the development of the Vidyadhara's early students.

In the early seventies, Trungpa Rinpoche had attracted many students with a background in higher education, psychology, and the arts. These early students were strongly interested in integrating their Buddhist training with their practice of Western disciplines. Those with background in the arts studied "dharma art" teachings, which explored the connection between meditation experience and the creative process. The Vidyadhara worked with these students in a number of ways, ranging from holding theater conferences, creating theater exercises, and writing and producing plays, to establishing the arts programs in the newly formed Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. At that time, the Vidyadhara's two bardo seminars were the core teachings studied by stu-

dents preparing to establish a therapeutic community. The community he established, called Maitri, or "loving-kindness," later evolved into the clinical psychology program at the Naropa Institute.

The Vidyadhara presented teachings on the realms and bardos as a way of understanding madness and sanity and learning to work directly and skillfully with extreme states of mind. Based on direct observation of mental patterns, these teachings provide a way "to see our situation along with that of our fellow human beings." As is usual in the Buddhist approach, such a study is not done as though one were studying rats in a laboratory, but begins with oneself and one's own state of mind. By familiarizing ourselves with our own insanity and making friends with mind in all its variety and extremes, we can learn to accommodate others and work with them without fear. So the process begins with a detailed exploration of our own mental states and of how we color our world through our preconceptions, expectations, hopes, and fears.

When we have developed the courage to look at ourselves without blinders, we can also begin to see others more clearly. We can connect with people, because we learn not to fear our mind, but to work with it through the practice of meditation. It is an approach based on nonviolence and acceptance, rather than on struggle or the overpowering of others. The acceptance of our experience with all its complexity and uncertainty provides the basis for any real change.

This volume could be considered a practical guide to Buddhist psychology. It is based on the interweaving of two core concepts: realm and bardo. The traditional Buddhist schema of the six realms—gods, jealous gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings—is sometimes taken to be a literal description of possible modes of existence. But in this case the schema of the six realms is used to describe the six complete worlds we create as the logical conclusions of such powerful emotional highlights as anger, greed, ignorance, lust, envy, and pride. Having disowned the power of our emotions and projected that power onto the world outside, we find ourselves trapped in a variety of ways and see no hope for escape.

The six realms provide a context for the bardo experience, which is described as the experience of no-man's-land. The bardos arise as the heightened experience of each realm, providing at the same time the possibility of awakening or of complete confusion, sanity or insanity. They are the ultimate expression of the entrapment of the realms. Yet it

is such heightened experience that opens the possibility of the sudden transformation of that solidity into complete freedom or open space. So even within the most solidified and seemingly hopeless accomplishment of ego's domain, the possibility of awakening is ever-present.

The two seminars included in this book approach the topic of the realms and the bardos in two very different ways. The first seminar associates each realm with a characteristic bardo state. In this case, the realms are pictured as islands and the bardos as the peaks highlighting each island. In contrast, the second seminar emphasizes the process of continually cycling through the bardos. (It should be noted that the second seminar introduces the bardo of dharmata, thereby increasing the list from six to seven.) From this perspective, each realm contains the full cycle of bardos, which serves as a means to strengthen and sustain its power. By looking at the same topic in two contrasting yet complementary ways, we can begin to understand and appreciate the richness and complexity of these teachings.

In general, Trungpa Rinpoche placed great emphasis on dialogue and discussion with his students. In order to preserve that flavor, the extensive discussions following the talks have been included in this volume. In that way, readers who wish to follow the flow and development of the teachings through the two seminars may do so. Others may prefer to concentrate on the talks themselves.

May these subtle and practical teachings strike home and thereby help to alleviate the confusion and suffering of these current times. May they spark humor and gentleness in dealing with our states of mind and those of others.

Part One

THE SIX STATES OF BARDO

Allenspark, 1971

ONE

Bardo

THERE SEEMS TO BE QUITE a misconception as to the idea of bardo, which is that it is purely connected with the death and after-death experience. But the experience of the six bardos is not concerned with the future alone; it also concerns the present moment. Every step of experience, every step of life, is bardo experience.

Bardo is a Tibetan word: *bar* means "in between" or, you could say, "no-man's-land," and *do* is like a tower or an island in that no-man's-land. It's like a flowing river which belongs neither to the other shore nor to this shore, but there is a little island in the middle, in between. In other words, it is present experience, the immediate experience of nowness—where you are, where you're at. That is the basic idea of bardo.

The experience of such a thing also brings the idea of space, of course. Without seeing the spacious quality, which does not belong to you or others, you would not be able to see the little island in the middle at all. The living experience of bardo could only come from seeing the background of space. And from that, within space or an understanding of space, a brilliant spark or flash happens. So generally, all bardo experiences are situations in which we have emerged from the past and we have not yet formulated the future, but strangely enough, we happen to be somewhere. We are standing on some ground, which is very mysterious. Nobody knows how we happen to be there.

That mysterious ground, which belongs to neither that nor this, is the actual experience of bardo. It is very closely associated with the practice of meditation. In fact, it *is* the meditation experience. That is why I

decided to introduce this subject. It is also connected with the subject of basic ego and one's experience of ego, including all sorts of journeys through the six realms of the world.

Beyond that is the issue of how we happen to be in the six realms of the world; how we find that experience is not seen as an evolutionary process, as it should be, but as extremely patchy and rugged, purely a glimpse. Somehow, things don't seem to be associated or connected with each other—they are very choppy and potent like gigantic boulders put together. Each experience is real, potent, impressionable, but generally we don't find that there is any link between those potent experiences. It is like going through air pockets—emotionally, spiritually, domestically, politically. The human situation passes through these highlights or dramas, and on the other hand, the absence of drama, and boredom—which is another aspect of drama. We go through all these processes. And somehow these isolated situations, which from our confused way of thinking seem to have nothing to do with the basic quality of continuity, are the continuity itself. So the only way to approach this is to see the evolutionary process.

I can't lay heavy trips on people to understand that or accept that purely on blind faith. In order not to lay heavy trips on people, we have to have some concrete thing to work on. That is where the six experiences of bardo come in—in each moment, each situation. Each of the six types of bardo is individual and unique in its own way. They are isolated situations on the one hand, but on the other hand they have developed and begun to make an impression on us, penetrating through us within that basic space or basic psychological background. So the bardo experience is very important to know. And in fact it is much more fundamental than simply talking about death and reincarnation and what you are supposed to experience after you die. It is more fundamental than that.

I know people would love to hear about undiscovered areas: "Do Martians exist?" In a lot of cases, when we talk about karma and reincarnation and life after death, we tend to make assumptions or logical ideas about them. And people often get quite emotional about it, because they would like to prove that there are such things as life after death or reincarnation. But the subject we are going to work on is not based on trying to prove logical conclusions. I mean, it is not really that desperate, is it? What difference does it really make whether we are going to come back

or not? The question of whether we are what we are or whether we are on some ground seems to be more realistic and more important.

In discussing the experience of the bardos we are working on that realistic aspect of the process of changing from birth to death, the intermediate process between birth and death. We are not trying to prove logically or by theology that life after death is important and that you must accept that on faith. In many cases, particularly in the West, people try to prove the existence of life after death, saying: "Such-and-such a saint or sage was a great person when he lived, and his example of being is beyond question—and he also says that there is such a thing as life after death." That is trying to prove the notion of life after death by innuendo: "It is true because he was an enlightened person as a living being and he said so!" When we try to prove the point of view of life after death in that way, we have no real proof. The only thing we could prove is that he was an awake person and that he said so.

There is almost a feeling of rediscovery: Eastern traditions have managed to present to the Western world that nothing is fatalistic but everything is continuously growing, as an evolutionary, developing process. In many cases, Westerners find this view extremely helpful and hopeful. They no longer just wait to die, but there's something hopeful—the message of continuity, that you have another chance. But I think all of these views and attitudes on the idea of rebirth and reincarnation and karma are very simple-minded ones. As well as that, we begin to feel we can afford to make mistakes, because surely we will have another chance. We are going to come back and we might do better. Often people who are afraid of dying have been saved by hearing the idea of reincarnation. They are no longer afraid of death, or even if they are afraid of death, they try to contemplate the idea of rebirth, which saves them from that. I don't think that is a complete way of looking into the situation.

The fatalistic quality of life and death depends on the present situation. The present situation is important—that's the whole point, the important point. Whether you continue or whether you don't continue, you are what you are at the moment. And you have six types of psychological thresholds, or bardo experiences, in your lifetime. We will go into details if you don't find this too heavy an intellectual supposition. You might ask, "Is it worth speculating about all these six types of bardo experiences? Why don't we just sit and meditate and forget all this jargon?"

Well, it is much easier said than done. To start with, when we begin to sit down and meditate, these collections do come up. They happen continuously in the thought process. Discursive thoughts, argumentative thoughts, self-denial thoughts—all sorts of thoughts begin to come up. So it seems to be important to know something about them. In other words, you could make use of these thoughts instead of pretending to be good and trying to suppress thoughts, as though you don't require them anymore or they don't require you anymore.

It is good to make use of speculative mind. That is exactly why the whole idea of studying scriptures and going through disciplines or practices is extremely important. It is a way of using these living materials that we have. Whether we try to quiet ourselves or not, these things come up constantly and do happen. Therefore, making use of such thought processes as a way of learning is extremely necessary and good and helpful and important—unless you develop "gold fever," believing that you have found some argument, some logic which you're excited about, and you spend the rest of your life arguing, trying to prove it logically all the time. If this begins to happen, then the intellect is not being properly cared for. It begins to take on a self-destructive quality, as in gold fever, where you're constantly willing to sacrifice your life looking for gold, gold, gold, and you end up destroying yourself. It is the same thing when you're trying to look for something, trying to prove something purely by intellectual speculation, beyond the ordinary level of thought process. The ordinary level of thought process has been transformed into a more ambitious one. Being able to click with your thought process and work something out is good, but beyond that goodness, you begin to get a faint idea of satisfaction—just a teeny-weeny bit to start with and then it begins to grow, grow, grow, and grow. It becomes addictive and self-destructive.

So that seems to be the limitation. If one's experiences, discoveries, and intellectual understandings coincide simultaneously, like putting together a jigsaw puzzle, that's fine. That doesn't mean that you have to have an absolute understanding or a complete command of the whole thing necessarily at all. But you could have a basic glimpse or understanding of the situation and you could go along with it, without indulging in the experience as a new discovery of an exciting thing. And I hope, in any case, to introduce in my lifetime, working with people in the West, all the teachings that are available and have been studied, prac-

ticed, and experienced in Tibet and elsewhere. And I have tremendous confidence that people in the West will be able to grasp them if we are not too rushed, if no one has caught gold fever halfway. That would be too bad.

I'm sure that such studying, such learning, means sacrificing intellect when it goes beyond, to the pleasurable point of intellectualization. It also means sacrificing the emotional, impulsive quality of wanting to exaggerate by tuning in to your basic neuroses and trying to interpret them as discoveries. That is another problem. You see, there are two extremes: one extreme is indulgence in the intellectual sense and in intellectual discovery; the other extreme is using the impulsive, instinctive level of the ego as camouflage to prove your state of mind in terms of the teachings. The two of them could work side by side with some people, or else there could be a greater portion of one or the other with others. It could work either way.

Our task is not purely trying to save ourselves alone—whether you are ninety-nine years old or whether you are ten years old doesn't make any difference. Our task is to see our situation along with that of our fellow human beings. As we work on ourselves, then we continuously work with others as well. That is the only way of developing ourselves, and that is the only way of relating with the six experiences of bardo. If we relate our experience with the dream bardo, the bardo between birth and death, the bardo of the before-death experience, or the bardo of emotions—all of these have a tremendous connection with our projection of the world outside. Other persons, animate and inanimate objects, the apparent phenomenal world, also play a great and important part. But unless we're willing to give in, give way, and learn from these situations, then our prefabricated learning—either by scripture or by the constant close watch of our instructor—doesn't help. It doesn't mean anything very much.

I think I've said enough. This much introduction is quite a handful. At this seminar, a lot of us, all of us actually, are brought together by individual convictions. That individual conviction means a great deal. We were not brought up in Buddhist families; our parents did not pay our fee and push us here. Everything here is based on individual conviction. We are free people; we have the right to use our freedom, our insight, for our own benefit as well as for sharing and communicating

with others as compassionately and openly as possible. Perhaps we should have a short question period.

Student: You said one should not try to save oneself alone, and then you used the expression "projections." But in another talk you said that in order to be able to communicate you have to respect the existence of the other person. This is more than projection, isn't it? It's a recognition.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, that is a very interesting point. And actually, to tell you the truth, nobody is quite certain whether it is one hundred percent projection or whether it is only partially a projection. Things do exist independent of you, outside you, and you exist independent of them in some ways. But occasionally you need their help to reaffirm yourself. If you are a fat person, somebody will say you are fat because they are thinner than you. Without their comparison you wouldn't know what you were, because you would have no way of working with yourself. And from that point of view it could be called a projection. But projection in this case does not necessarily mean purely your hallucination; things outside *do* exist as they are. But that's a very dangerous thing to say.

Things do exist as they are, but we tend to see our version of them as they are, rather than things as they really are. That makes everything that we see projections. But one doesn't have to make a definite and absolute reassurance of that necessarily at all. You just go along with situations, go along with dealing with them. If you are going too far, they'll shake you. They'll beat you to death if you're going too far. If you're going well, if you are balanced, they will present hospitality and openness luxuriously to you. I mean, that much of a situation is there anyway; some kind of rapport between this and that goes on all the time. As long as a person is sensitive enough to experience it, that rapport goes on. That's the important point. One doesn't have to make it definite and clear-cut as to which is not projection and which is projection. It is sort of a gradual understanding. Until the attainment of buddhahood, this experience goes on—and nobody is able to answer it because they themselves don't know.

Student: When was the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* written?

Trungpa Rinpoche: According to tradition, it was about the fourteenth century, or about two hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism

into Tibet from India. At that time, a particular teacher called Karma Lingpa discovered this teaching—he did not actually compose it, but it is as though he discovered, or rediscovered, this teaching. The actual teaching existed in the seventh century. He rediscovered the idea of bardo and the death experience out of his own experience as well, in the death of his very beloved child. He had watched the death of his child, and after he had conducted the funeral service and the child had been buried, he came back home to find that his wife was also just about to die. So he watched and he worked through this experience of the death process. From that experience he discovered that the process of birth and death is continual, taking place all the time. And therefore the six types of bardo were developed.

I think it had something to do with the local situation in Tibet at the time as well, because generally people regarded death as extremely important as well as birth. People often gathered around their dying friends, dying relatives, and tried to work with them and help them. That was the common tradition. It seems that in the West, people make birth more important. You congratulate someone for having a child, and you have parties for birthdays. But there are no parties for dying.

Student: In Ireland there is the wake, or party for the deceased, which happens down South as well.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I hope so. I'm pleased. That is probably connected with ancient ideas, which is very right, very good. I think it is extremely important to a dying person that he or she receives proper acknowledgment that he is dying, and that death plays an important part in life as well as birth—as much as one's birthday parties. It's an important thing.

Student: I didn't understand the distinction between intellectual and instinctual.

Trungpa Rinpoche: In instinct, you don't use any logic. To put it very bluntly, extremely bluntly, if you're studying and practicing the teachings of some religion, and you have some pseudo experience of the spiritual path—sort of a shadow experience of what has been described in the scriptures—you'll go along with it, but you are not quite certain exactly. You would like to believe that these experiences are true experiences. And at a certain point, you have to make up your mind whether all this experience and development have been pure hypocrisy on your

part or not—you have to make a decision. Either you have to renounce your discoveries as being false up to that point or you have to make another leap of building yourself up.

That very peak point becomes extremely important to a person—whether he will confess everything completely, or whether he will latch on to some continual buildup. If a person has decided to continually build up and to latch on to that, then he begins to realize that he can't keep up with the speed of what's going on, with his experience. In the scriptures, the analogy for this is a street beggar who's been enthroned as a universal monarch. There is a sudden shock, and you don't know what to do. You never had a penny; now you have the rest of the world, from your point of view. And you automatically freak out because of such a change. You act as though you are a universal monarch, although in mentality you are still a beggar. A beggar doesn't make a good millionaire. If there's no gradual experience of the transition, things will become chaotic and emotionally disturbed as well in such a relationship. That is, of course, the emotional or the instinctive.

The scholarly approach is less violent than that, less dangerous than that; but at the same time it is extremely contagious in the sense of bringing you down. Continual bondage is put on yourself, all the time. You become heavier and heavier and heavier. You don't accept anything unless it is logically proven, up to the point that the logic brings you pleasure, the discovery brings you pleasure. In certain neurotic intellectual states of mind, *everything* is based on pain and pleasure. If your discovery brings pleasure, then you accept it as a masterpiece. If that discovery or logical conclusion doesn't bring you pleasure, or victory, then you feel you've been defeated. You find this with certain college professors: if you discuss their sore point in their particular subject, if there's the slightest usage of certain words, since their whole world is based on words, the structure of words, they become extremely upset or offended. The whole thing is based on pleasure and pain, from the point of view of getting logical conclusions. But the scholar doesn't claim that he or she has spiritual experiences, as the other person would claim. In fact, the scholar would be afraid of any actual experience of what he's teaching; he wouldn't actually commit himself at all. He may be a professor of meditation, but he wouldn't dare to take part in sitting meditation because that doesn't bring pleasure or any logical conclusions for his work or research.

Student: If you really start to study very hard, do you have any conscious control over the experiences you receive? Doesn't it just happen to you? Can you really push it too fast?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you can push too fast, of course, but that doesn't mean the whole thing should be ruled out. I mean, there is a balanced pattern happening all the time. It's a question of how open you are. The minute you set foot on the path, if there's room for suggestion and if you are flexible and not too serious or sincere, there is, of course, room for study. But once a person begins to make up his mind that whatever he is doing is a matter of death or life, kill or cure—as they say, "publish or perish"—then it could become self-destructive. It is very individual; you can't make generalizations.

S: Is it possible to check yourself when you start on the path so that you're not deceiving yourself all the time about your seriousness, your sincerity, and so that it doesn't just become a trap?

TR: Generally, if you allow some space between the action and the thinking, it is a natural process, always predictable. In this case, there will be a definite experience of genuine understanding of yourself as you are and as what you're trying to do—in other words, your hypocritical aspect and you as an innocent child. That will be quite obvious, provided you allow room or space between action and thinking. It will be quite a natural process.

A person might be convinced that he has gained something which he actually hasn't gained. And if you talk to such a person, he might behave as if he has no doubt about himself at all. He overrides your doubts about him: there's no question about his attainment; it's absolutely valid; he is a bank of knowledge and he knows what he's doing. But the very fact of the way he overrides any doubts means the subtlety of something is not quite right. It could happen that if we were really honest with ourselves, if we allowed space for ourselves, we automatically would know that the subtlety of self-hypocrisy is always there, without fail. Even if you had great power, great willpower to override these obstacles, still you would know. There still will be a very faint but very sharp, very delicate and penetrating understanding that something is not quite right. That is basic sanity, which continues all the time, without fail. That basic sanity really allows you to engage your speed and your pressure, so to speak. It happens all the time, continuously.

S: I want to know how it works, the space between action and the thinking process. Is it that you think of an action, then do it?

TR: When I talk about space, I don't mean you have to delay yourself between thinking and doing things. It is a fundamental understanding that, to start with, what you're doing is not warfare. No one is losing and no one is gaining. There's time to be open. It doesn't mean you have to slow down your footsteps and be half an hour late for your interview necessarily; it is not that literal. But there will be some feeling of spaciousness or roomy quality, that you can afford to be what you are. Really, you can afford to be what you are. You may think you're alone and nobody's with you, but that in itself is good enough. The aloneness is good, because you are definitely what you are, clear-cut what you are. Your area has not been intruded on or taken advantage of by others. You have your space; you have your place. It is a definite thing: you are alone and you can afford to be what you are, and you don't have to rush into it. It is fundamental space, basic space—extreme, fundamental space.

Student: Usually in real life one cannot afford to do or be what one wants to be for oneself because it involves many other people, so it can be very selfish.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The point is not that you have to centralize yourself. If you can afford to be what you are, then that automatically means you could receive others as your guests. Because the ground your guests are treading on is safe ground, nobody is going through the floorboard. It is a sound, well-built house, your own house, and people could be welcome in it. That makes other people more comfortable and welcome, so they don't have to put up their portion of resistance anymore. It is mutual understanding. You see, generally people pick up some kind of psychic vibrations that you put out, and before you exchange words there is a kind of meeting of the two psyches. That takes place continuously.

Student: Could you elaborate on the importance of studying the six states of bardo in connection with meditation experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You don't have to try to put them together; they are the same experience. However, the six types of bardo are postmeditation experience, the meditation-in-action aspect. Sitting meditation is

being, a way of being in open space, providing a clear white canvas in order to paint pictures on it. So they are complementary to one other.

Student: As Evans-Wentz mentions in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,*[1] there are various books of the dead in various cultures. Are the experiences they describe inspired parables, or have they actually been experienced and can be experienced by us, too?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, all ancient traditions—such as the Egyptian, the Bön tradition of Tibet, the Shintoism of Japan, the Taoism of China, and others—all paid a great deal of attention to the process of growth. The process of growth means birth as well as coloring, blooming, decaying, turning into a seed, dropping on the ground, regenerating as another plant, and going through the cycle of the four seasons continuously. Because of that, because it is of the same nature, human life has been dealt with in exactly the same way. So much sacredness has been imposed on the idea of the birth and death process. I don't think it is so much an intellectual, philosophical, or religious phenomenon, but it is much more earthy—being one with the facts of life, with this growth process.

For instance, in Bön, the Tibetan pre-Buddhist tradition, they say the time of death and the time of birth should coincide. That brings a conclusion to that process of birth and death—which includes the climate, the time, the location, the direction the dying person is facing, the particular collection of parents and relatives, and how many people are gathered there, how many men, women, or children. That whole collection brings a total picture of complete conclusion. So they are very earthy people. It is quite different from how modern occultists work with the same thing. It is very earthy; nobody allows room for hallucinations or imagination. Everything is dealt with completely within the tradition and the actual experience of the moment.

From that point of view, in all the traditional civilizations of many different cultures, the death experience is regarded as an important point. And on top of that, the Buddhist discovery was to see all those colors, directions, temperatures, and climates of the dying person as a psychological picture. So it is seen completely differently but in exactly the same way.

S: Are the deities which appear during the forty-nine days following death just visions, or are they actually experienced?

TR: Nobody knows. But as an experience of a given situation develops, it has a feeling around it as well. That could be said of anything, like the meeting of two friends—the situation of the meeting, the nature of the conversation, the particular kind of prelude to the meeting the individuals had before they met the other person, what kind of state of mind you are in, what kind of incidents you have gone through, whether you just got up and felt high-spirited when you met this person or whether you were just involved in a car accident and you happened to drag yourself into a friend's house and met this person—I mean, such situations make *real* life, the living quality. From that point of view it is a definite thing, an experiential thing. But as far as the death process is concerned, nobody knows. It is left to individuals to work through it from their living experiences.

S: If you have decided to return to earth, the soul sees visions of copulating males and females. Well, this is a marvelous simile, but does that vision really exist?

TR: It could exist, sure. If you are without a home for seven weeks and you see somebody decorating a beautiful apartment . . .

Student: Through meditation I get myself together. But can I use it to help other people, all those who are oppressed?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, definitely, yes. It wouldn't become true meditation if you couldn't help other people. That is a criterion of meditation—meditation experience is not only an introverted experience, but it is also associated with the experience of life in general. You see, the idea of meditation is complete sanity, a completely balanced state of mind. If you are a completely sane person, even your example will be inspiring to others, that you are a balanced person, beautiful to be with.

Student: Is it helpful to study the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Sure, of course. But you have to understand the symbolism, all the subtleties, because the people who wrote such writings were very earthy people. They saw things as they really are. When they say *water,* they really mean it. When we say *water,* we might see it as something coming out of taps, in terms of cold and hot. It could be misleading.

Discussion Next Morning

Student: We were talking this morning about ego, and we seemed to have trouble defining it. Could you say what it is?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, there seem to be different ways of using the word *ego*. To some people, the ego is that which sustains them. That which gives some kind of guideline or practicality in dealing with things is referred to as ego, being conscious of being oneself. And you exert effort through it, so any kind of self-respect is referred to as ego, which is a general sense of the term.

But ego as we are discussing it is slightly different from that. In this case ego is that which is constantly involved with some kind of paranoia, some kind of panic—in other words, hope and fear. That is to say, as you operate there is a constant reference back to yourself. As you refer back to yourself, then a criterion of reference develops in terms of hope and fear: gaining something or losing one's identity. It is a constant battle. That seems to be the notion of ego in this case, its neurotic aspect.

You could have a basic sound understanding of the logic of things as they are without ego. In fact you can have greater sanity beyond ego; you can deal with situations without hope and fear, and you can retain your self-respect or your logical sanity in dealing with things. Continuously you can do so, and you can do so with much greater skill, in a greater way, if you don't have to make the journey to and fro and if you don't have to have a running commentary going on side by side with your operation. It is more powerful and more definite. You see, getting beyond ego doesn't mean that you have to lose contact with reality at all. I think that in a lot of cases there is a misunderstanding that you need ego and that without it you can't operate. That's a very convenient basic twist: hope and fear as well as the notion of sanity are amalgamated together and used as a kind of excuse, that you need some basic ground to operate—which is, I would say, a misunderstanding. It's the same as when people say that if you are a completely enlightened being, then you have no dualistic notion of things. That is the idea of ultimate zombie, which doesn't seem to be particularly inspiring or creative at all.

Student: What do you mean by basic sanity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is relating with things which come up within

your experience and knowing experiences as they are. It's kind of the rhythm between experience and your basic being, like driving on the road in accordance with the situation of the road, a kind of interchange. That is the basic sanity of clear perception. Otherwise, if you wanted to reshape the road in accordance with your excitement or your wishes, then possibly, instead of you reshaping the road, the road might reshape you and you might end up in an accident. This is insane, suicidal.

S: How about vajrayana, crazy wisdom?

TR: Well, crazy wisdom—that's a very good question—is when you have a complete exchange with the road, so that the shape of the road becomes your pattern as well. There's no hesitation at all. It's complete control—not only control, but a complete dance with it, which is very sharp and penetrating, quick precision. That precision comes from the situation outside as well: not being afraid of the outside situation, we can tune into it. That's the fearless quality of crazy wisdom.

Student: What do you mean when you speak of "the simple-minded attitude toward karma"?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, there seem to be all sorts of different attitudes toward the idea of karma. One is that if you constantly try to be good, then there will be constant good results. That attitude to karma doesn't help you to transcend karmic creation. The ultimate idea is to transcend sowing the seed of any karma, either good or bad. By sowing karmic seeds you perpetually create more karma, so you are continuously wound up in the wheel of samsara.

Another attitude to karma is that it is connected with rebirth, life after death—which is pure blind faith. That approach brings a certain amount of psychological comfort: this is not the only life, but there are a lot more to come; other situations will come up so you don't have to feel fatalistic any more. That kind of attitude to karma is not dealing with the root of the karmic situation but is purely trying to play games with it or else trying to use karma as a comforter. It is based on distrust in oneself. Knowing that you are making mistakes, you think that even if you do make mistakes, you can afford to correct them, because you have a long, long time, endless time to do so.

S: I understand that an enlightened person doesn't carry a trace of what happens, but the rest of us do.

TR: In terms of an enlightened being, his attitude to karma is that

either of the two polarities of good and bad is the same pattern—fundamentally a dead end. So there's no fear involved. In fact, there's more effort, more spontaneous effort of transcending sowing karmic seeds. In the ordinary case, you are not quite sure what you are doing, and there's fear of the end result anyway. So there's the constant panic of losing oneself, the ego.

Student: Could you discuss what it is that reincarnates, especially in relation to the Theravada doctrine of anatman, egolessness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, from the point of view of anatman, nothing reincarnates. It is more of a rebirth process rather than reincarnation. The idea of reincarnation is that a solid, living quality is being passed on to the next being. It is the idea of some solid substance being passed on. But in this case, it's more of a rebirth. You see, something continues, but at the same time, nothing continues. In a sense we're like a running stream. You could say, such and such a river, such and such a stream. It has a name, but if you examine it carefully, that river you named three hundred years ago isn't there at all; it is completely different, changing, passing all the time. It is transforming from one aspect to another. That complete transformation makes it possible to take rebirth. If one thing continued all the time there would be no possibilities for taking rebirth and evolving into another situation. It is the change which is important in terms of rebirth, rather than one thing continuing.

S: Doesn't that happen moment to moment within a lifetime?

TR: Yes, exactly. You see, the ultimate idea of rebirth is not purely the idea of physical birth and death. Physical birth and death are very crude examples of it. Actually, rebirth takes place every moment, every instant. Every instant is death; every instant is birth. It's a changing process: there's nothing you can grasp onto; everything is changing. But there is some continuity, of course—the change *is* the continuity. The impermanence of the rebirth is the continuity of it. And because of that, there are possibilities of developing and possibilities of regressing. Certain new elements and inspirations could insert themselves into that process of continual change. You can enter yourself into the middle of the queue, if you are queuing, because this queue is made out of small particles, or people, rather than one thing.

Student: Doesn't alaya consciousness provide the ground of continuity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In order to have alaya consciousness, you have to have change taking place all the time. This common ground idea, or alaya, is not ground in terms of solid ground, but perpetually changing ground. That's why it remains consciousness—or the unconscious state—it is a changing process.

Student: This morning there was some confusion in our discussion group about the place of technique in dealing with the problems of everyday life and in meditating, and whether there should be any techniques at all.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Whether there shouldn't be any techniques or there should be techniques, both remain techniques in any case. I mean, you can't step out of one thing because you have gotten a better one, you see? It's a question of what is needed. Any kind of application becomes a technique, therefore there is continual room for discipline.

S: Is the technique of "no technique" a fiction? In fact, do you always have to apply some technique?

TR: When you talk about "no technique" and "technique," when you begin to speak in terms of "yes" and "no," then that is automatically a polarity. And however much you are able to reduce your negativity into nothingness, it still remains negative as opposed to positive. But at the same time, being without the sophisticated techniques of everyday life, the practice of meditation is in a sense more ruthless. In other words, it is not comforting and not easy. It is a very narrow and direct path because you can't introduce any other means of occupying yourself. Everything is left to a complete bare minimum of simplicity—which helps you to discover everything.

If you present the simplicity of nothingness, the absence of technique, the so-called absence of technique, then that absence produces a tremendously creative process. Nothing means everything in this case. That helps you to learn not to be afraid to dance and not to be afraid of too many things crowding in on you. It helps keep that guideline of simplicity. Whereas if you already have complex techniques and patterns, if you already have handfuls of things, then you don't want to pick up any more. Any new situation that comes in becomes overcrowding. But all of these tactics, so to speak, are fundamentally still acts of duality, of course.

S: Is that all right? Is that the best we can do at this point, to act within that duality?

TR: Well, there's no other thing to work on; the best we can do is just work on what we have.

Student: Some people reach a sort of meditative state without knowing it. I met somebody who was emphatically against even hearing about meditation, and yet he was often in a meditative state. But if I told him, he would be furious.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that's always the thing: even if you start with the bare minimum, complete nothingness, it tends to bring you something anyway. You end up practicing some kind of teaching; that automatically happens. Before you realize where you are, you have technique; before you realize where you are, you have religion, so to speak, you have a spiritual path. You see, you can't completely ignore the whole thing, because if you reject everything completely, that means there is still a rejecter. As long as there's a rejecter, then you have a path. Even if you completely ignore the road, there still will be a pair of feet, and they have to tread on something. That automatically happens. Things always work with this kind of logic. If you commit yourself to collecting a lot of things, you end up being poor. But if you reject—not exactly reject, but purely accept everything as bare simplicity—then you become rich. These two polarities, two aspects, continue all the time. It is a natural thing. It doesn't matter whether you are studying Christianity or Buddhism. Whatever technique or tradition it may be, it's the same thing as far as ego is concerned; it's still stuff that you are collecting. It doesn't matter what this stuff consists of, still you are collecting something.

TWO

The Six Realms of Being

GENERALLY THERE IS the basic space to operate, in terms of creative process, whether you are confused or whether you are awake. That basic space acts as the fundamental ground for the idea of bardo. Many of you may also have heard about the development of ego, which is exactly the same pattern as the operation of bardo. The experience of bardo is also operating on the basis of that evolution of ego. But the discovery of sudden glimpse, or the experience of bardo, is a momentary thing, impermanent. So fundamentally we might say that the teaching of bardo is closer to the concept of impermanence.

Bardo is that sudden glimpse of experience which is constantly developing. We try to hold on to it, and the moment we try to hold on to it, it leaves us, because of the very fact that we are trying to hold on to it, which is trying to give birth to it. You see something happen and you would like to give birth to it. You would like to start properly in terms of giving birth, but once you begin to prepare this birth, you realize you can't give birth anymore. You lost your child already by trying officially to adopt it. That is the kind of bardo experience which happens in everyday life. It is operating in terms of space as well as in terms of ego.

Bardo is generally associated with samsaric mind, not necessarily with the awakened state of being. There is a background of bardo experience, which is like a river. A river does not belong to the other shore or to this shore; it is just a river, a no-man's-land. Such a no-man's-land, or river, has different characteristics: it may be a turbulent river or a gently flowing river. There are different categories and types of rivers—our basic

situation, where we are at, our present psychological state of being—which make the bardo experience more outstanding. If there is an impressive little island, by being in the middle of a turbulent river, it becomes more outstanding. An island in the middle of a gently flowing river is also more impressive and outstanding. At the same time, the shape and condition of the island itself will be completely different, depending on the river and the background. Therefore it seems necessary to go through these patterns, which are called the six types of world: the world of the gods, the world of the jealous gods, the world of human beings, the world of animals, the world of hungry ghosts, and the world of hell. Before we get into the bardo experience, it is very important to know these particular types of worlds. They are not purely mythical stories or concepts of heaven and hell; they are also psychological pictures of heaven and hell and all the rest.

We could begin with heaven. The notion of heaven is a state of mind which is almost meditative. Heavenly psychology is based on a state of absorption in something, or spiritual materialism. It is complete absorption, which automatically, of course means indulging ourselves in a particular pleasurable situation—not necessarily material pleasure, but more likely spiritual pleasure within the realm of ego. It's like the notion of the four jhana states. Traditionally, the thirty-three god realms are based on different degrees of jhana states, up to the point of a completely formless jhana state containing both experienc*er* and experienc*ing*. But if there is an experiencer and also an experience, then that experience must be either pleasurable or painful—nothing else could exist beyond those limits. It could be an extremely sophisticated experience, seemingly transcending pain and pleasure, but there is still a very subtle and sophisticated experience of some *thing* going on. The thingness and the awareness of self continue. That is the realm of the formless gods—limitless space; limitless consciousness; not that, not this; *not* not that, *not* not this—the full state of absorption in a formless state. Other states as well are inclined toward that state of mind, but they become less sophisticated as the experience is on a more and more gross level. The first state, therefore, the realm of spiritual pleasure, is so extremely pleasurable that you can almost afford to relax. But somehow the relaxation doesn't happen, because there's an experiencer and an experience.

That is the realm of the gods. And in that god realm, as you can imagine, in such a state of spiritual materialism, there is a weakness. The

intensity of your experience is based on collecting, possessing further experiences. That means that fundamentally your state of mind is based on give and take. You are developing immunity to temptation and fascination in order to seek pleasure and try to grasp hold of the pleasure more definitely.

As that state of mind develops in terms of the six realms of the world, we are talking about regressing from that sophisticated state of spiritual materialism in the world of heaven down to the world of hell—regressing. Such a state of pleasure in the world of heaven, that complete meditative absorption into the jhana states, automatically brings up temptations and questions. You begin to get tired of being extremely refined, and you want to come down to some raggedness. Jealousy or envy or dissatisfaction with your present state comes up automatically as an obvious next step, which then leads to the realm of the jealous gods, the asuras.

The realm of the asuras is highly energetic, almost in contrast to that state of spiritual absorption. It's as if somebody had been far away a long time from their civilization, in the middle of a desert island, and they suddenly had a chance to come down to the nearest city. Automatically, their first inspiration, of course, would be to try to be extremely busy and entertain themselves, indulging in all sorts of things. In that way the energetic quality of busyness in the realm of the asuras develops.

Even that experience of tremendous energy, driving force, trying to grasp, trying to hold on to external situations, is not enough. Somehow you need not only rushing, but you have to pick something up, taste it, swallow it, digest it. That kind of intimacy is needed. You begin to feel tired of rushing too hard, too much, and you begin to think in terms of grasping and taking. You would like to take advantage of the situation and the intimacy of possessing, the sexual aspect, the tenderness. You try to use it, chew it. That is the world of human beings. (In this case, when we talk of the world of human beings or the world of animals, it is not necessarily human life or animal life literally, as conventionally known. It's the psychological aspect.) So the human realm is built on passion and desire.

Somehow, indulging ourselves in passion and desire is again not quite enough—we need more and more. You realize that you can come down to a more gross level, a cruder level. And realizing that, you begin to yearn for much more real and obvious experience as a way of putting

into effect your emotional need. But at the same time, you are tired of relationships. You are tired of relating to experience in terms of pleasure, and you begin to find all sorts of facets of your experience are involved with just that. You begin to look for something simpler, a more instinctive way of dealing with things, in which you don't have to look for the complicated patterns of that passion, that desire. Then you are reduced to the animal level. Everything is put into practice in an instinctive way rather than by applying intellectual or emotional frustrations as a way of getting or possessing something.

Then, again, such a state of mind, in which you are purely acting on the impulsive or instinctive level of the animal realm, is not gross enough. You begin to feel that there is a tremendous weakness in your state of being, in such animal mentality. You don't want to give away anything, but you would like to take more. So far, all experience—from the realm of the gods down to the animal level—has been a kind of exchange constantly, a balancing act or play. And somehow you begin to realize and come to the conclusion that exchanging or commuting between two situations, even at the blind level, is too exhausting. Then you look for a highly crude form of maintaining yourself. That is the world of the hungry ghosts. You don't want to give away anything, but you just want to take. And since you do not want to give anything away, since you would purely like to take in, the mentality of that world becomes an extremely hungry one, because unless you give, you won't get anything. And the more you get, the more you want to receive. In other words, you do not want to give or share any experience. There's so much hunger and thirst, me-ness, unwillingness to give an inch, or even one fraction of a moment, to relate with the world outside. So the hungry ghost realm is the height of poverty.

Ultimately that sense of poverty leads to aggression. You not only do not want to give anything away, but you would like to destroy that which reminds you of giving. That is the ultimate world of hell, or naraka, an instant and extremely powerful state of aggression or hatred.

All these six states, these six different aspects of the world, are the rivers in which the bardo experience is taking shape. In terms of the realm of the gods, it's a very dreamlike quality. The realm of hell is very aggressive and definite. It would be good to think about that process of the six types of world and become familiar with those different states of mind before we get into bardo experience itself. That would be very

helpful. Having already developed that ground, we can pinpoint the different experiences of bardo and fit them into these different types of rivers, samsaric rivers. It would be much easier to work on at that level.

And strangely enough, these experiences of the six realms—gods, jealous gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell—are *space*, different versions of space. It seems intense and solid, but in actual fact it isn't at all. They are different aspects of space—that's the exciting or interesting part. In fact, it is complete open space, without any colors or any particularly solid way of relating. That is why they have been described as six types of consciousness. It is pure consciousness rather than a solid situation—it almost could be called unconsciousness rather than even consciousness. The development of ego operates completely at the unconscious level, from one unconscious level to another unconscious level. That is why these levels are referred to as loka, which means "realm" or "world." They are six types of *world*. Each is a complete unit of its own. In order to have a world, you have to have an atmosphere; you have to have space to formulate things. So the six realms are the fundamental space through which any bardo experience operates. Because of that, it is possible to transmute these spaces into six types of awakened state, or freedom.

Student: Can you be in more than one type of world at the same time?

Trungpa Rinpoche: With momentum the worlds always change. But it seems that there is one particular governing factor.

Student: When you're in one of these worlds, can you remember another one?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you have the instinct of the other one. That's why you can move from one experience to another experience.

S: By your own will?

TR: Not necessarily by your own will, but you sense that you know something. For instance, dogs occasionally forget that they are dogs. They almost think they're human beings taking part in human society.

Student: These worlds of the bardo, are they real, or are they mind-manufactured?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a very heavy question: What is real? It is very difficult to distinguish 100 percent real in any case.

S: Does it make any difference if these take place only in the mind or in reality?

TR: Well, mind operates realistically.

S: Does it make any difference whether they are actually acted out?

TR: Well, they are acted out, of course, but that activity is questionable—whether it is purely action for the sake of action or whether it is inspired by the mind. The point is that once you are in any of these realms, you are completely immersed in it. You can't help showing the internal impressions of it. You are completely submerged into that kind of experience. It is so living and so real. It is almost confusing whether the experience of hell, for instance, is external hell or internal hell, purely in your mind. At the time, you can't distinguish whether you are just thinking or whether you've been made to think that way. And I don't think you can avoid acting at all. If you are nervous, for instance, much as you try not to act nervous, there will still be some signs of nervousness.

S: But take passion, for instance: you can restrain your action, but you can't restrain your thinking.

TR: You can. At a certain gross level there are different ways of putting out passion. Passion is not sexual passion alone at all, there are many kinds: one particular desire can be replaced by all sorts of other things. You see, what generally happens is that if you don't want to reveal completely your full state of being, quite conveniently you tend to find ways of interpreting that in order to get satisfaction in all sorts of ways.

S: So whether you act on it or not, you're in that world?

TR: Yes, at that time you're in that world, and action happens.

S: And repressing it doesn't change the fact?

TR: No, you always find a way of doing it.

Student: I sense, when you talk about transmuting the six realms of samsara into the six realms of the awakened state, that the six worlds are to be avoided or worked through into something else. Is that a good way to think about it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think replacing them with something else would help. That doesn't seem to be the point. The point is that within that realm of intensity there is the absence of that intensity as well—otherwise intensity couldn't exist, couldn't happen, couldn't operate. Intensity must develop in some kind of space, some kind of environment. That basic environment is the transcendental aspect.

S: There's no sense in leaving the world of hell behind, transmuting it into something which excludes hell?

TR: No, then you go through the realms again and again. You see, you start from the world of heaven, come down to hell, get tired of it, and go back up to heaven. And you come down again and again—or the other way around. That's why it is called *samsara,* which means "whirlpool." You are continually running around and around and around. If you try to find a way out by running, by looking for an alternative, it doesn't happen at all.

S: Does it make any sense to look for a way out?

TR: It's more like a way in, rather than a way out.

Student: Were you ever in the hell world yourself? Have you yourself ever experience the hell world?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Definitely, yes.

S: What do you do?

TR: I try to remain in the hell world.

Student: What is the basic ground that allows one to enter completely into that state and yet be completely out of that state at the same time?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The point seems to be that the hell realm, or whatever realm may be, is like the river, and the bardo experience out of that is the island. So you could almost say that the bardo experience is the entrance to the common ground.

S: Is it the key to that experience?

TR: You could say key, but that is making a more than necessary emphasis.

S: So it's like the high point or peak.

TR: Yes. Yes.

Student: You spoke yesterday of the ground or canvas on which experience is painted. How does that relate to the river and the island?

TR: That's a different metaphor altogether. In this case, the canvas had never known colors yet, it's an open canvas. Even if you paint on the canvas, it remains white, fundamentally speaking. You could scrape off the paint.

S: I still don't see how it relates to the gulf between the ground and the experience.

TR: The experience is, I suppose, realizing that the turbulent quality purely happens on the surface, so to speak. So you are not rushing to try to solve the problem of turbulence, but you are diving in—in other words, fearlessness. Complete trust in confusion, so to speak. Seeing the confused quality as the truth of its own reality. Once you begin to develop the confidence and fearless understanding of confusion as being true confusion, then it is no longer threatening. That is the ground. You begin to develop space.

S: Where hope and fear cease to exist?

TR: Of course.

S: And activity continues; each state continues. Nothing changes?

TR: Nothing changes.

Student: If confusion persists, do you just let it persist? Don't you try to clear it out?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You do not go against the force, or try to change the course of the river.

S: Suppose there are four exits, and in our confusion we don't know which is a good one?

TR: You see, the whole idea is not to try to calm *down*; it is to see the calm aspect at the *same* level rather than just completely calming down. These particular states of turbulence, the emotions or confusions, also have positive qualities. One has to learn to transmute the positive qualities as part of them. So you don't want to completely destroy their whole existence. If you destroy them, if you try to work against them, it's possible that you will be thrown back constantly, because fundamentally you're running against your own energy, your own nature.

S: There's still something undesirable I feel about confusion. You always think that you're going from some unenlightened state to an enlightened state, that if you stay with it there is this little hope or feeling that you will develop clarity sooner or later.

TR: Yes, there will be clarity. Definitely.

S: So you don't want confusion to be around, you want to get rid of it, but nevertheless you have to stay in it to see it?

TR: It doesn't exactly work that way. You see, you begin to realize that the clarity is always there. In fact, when you are in a state of complete clarity you realize that you never needed to have made such a fuss. Rather than realizing how good you are now, you begin to see how foolish you've been.

Student: Does anything actually exist outside of the mind itself? Does anything actually exist?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I would say yes and no. Outside the mind is, I suppose you could say, that which is not duality—open space. That doesn't mean that the whole world is going to be empty. Trees will be there, rivers will be there, mountains will be there. But that doesn't mean they are some *thing*. Still, tree remains tree and rocks remain rocks.

Student: I wonder, in the human world is there any advantage over, say, hell for crossing over, or is it equal in all respects?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it's the same. The karmic potential of the human realm seems to be greater because there is more communication in the human state. The human state is the highest state of passion, and the ultimate meaning of passion is communication, making a link, relationship. So there is a kind of open space, the possibility of communication. But that doesn't mean that the human realm is an exit from the six realms of the world. The experience of passion is very momentary: you might have a human state of mind one moment and the next moment you have another realm coming through.

S: But seeing as how we have human bodies, isn't the human world the one in which we have the best chance to accept ourselves for what we are?

TR: Yes, but we are talking about the realms as six experiences within the human body. We are not talking about the different realms as other types of worlds.

S: I understand that, but since we have human bodies and minds, isn't passion the basic framework of our lives rather than hatred? Don't we have the best chance of crossing over within that framework?

TR: I think so. That's precisely why we can discuss these six types of world in a human body. So as far as experience goes it is equal, but the physical situation of the human realm seems to be unequal or special. As I've said already, we are discussing these realms now, in our human bodies. However, all of them are human states of mind, one no more so than any other.

Student: I'm not clear about the difference between humans and asuras.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The asura realm is a kind of intermediate state be-

tween the intense passion of the human realm and intense bliss, which is the world of heaven. Somehow there's a discontentment with the blissful state; one is looking for a more crude experience. Then you begin to transform your experience into that of an asura, which is energy, speed, rushing, and a very sudden glimpse of comparison which is called jealousy or envy. But I don't think jealousy and envy are concrete enough words to express this state of neuroticism. It's a combination of jealousy with the efficient speed of looking for an alternative to the blissful state of the world of the gods.

Then in the human realm you begin to find some way of communicating, some way of making that experience more concrete. You begin to find passion instead of pure jealousy and comparison alone. You begin to find that you can get into it: you can dive into it and indulge, in fact. In the realm of the asura there's no time for indulgence because the whole thing is extremely fast and rushed. It's almost a reaction against the blissful state.

I would say that with all the realms you are not quite certain what you are actually getting and what you are trying to get hold of. So you try to find the nearest situation and reinforce that or change that. There's constant confusion.

Student: If you drop all your usual patterns of relating, what holds on to giving logical answers?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You can't do that in any case. Impossible.

S: You could go to the desert.

TR: Then there would still be the desert. If you try to give up patterns, that in itself forms another pattern.

S: But what if you're not trying?

TR: If you are not trying to drop anything, either pattern or without pattern, and you are accepting all of them as just black and white, you have complete control; you are the master of the whole situation. Before, you were dealing purely at the ground level, but in this case you are dealing from an aerial view, so you have more scope.

Student: Does anxiety have anything to do with the asura realm, that rushing quality?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes.

S: It also seems that the rushing quality is very closely connected to the hungry ghost state.

TR: That's a good observation. The world of hell is ultimate crudeness, and the world of the gods is ultimate gentility. The hungry ghost and asura realms are the intermediaries between these two realms and the animal and human realms.

Student: Sometimes the fear of losing oneself, of losing ego, is very overwhelming. It's very real. Is there any way to prepare the ground for dropping that, or do you just have to drop it one step at a time?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think the only alternative left is just to drop. If you are as close as that, if you're extremely close to the cliff—

S: You mean to the ground.

TR: To the cliff. [*Laughter*]

S: It almost seems as if someone has to push you over; you won't go yourself.

TR: Yes. [*Laughter*]

Student: I was wondering, is there really any reality except the reality about which everyone agrees?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You might find that everybody agrees on it, but sometimes people don't agree. To some people, one particular aspect is more real than the others. Somehow, trying to prove what is real and what is not real isn't particularly beneficial.

S: Is it possible that a real world exists, but that even if we all agree as human beings, a catfish or a gopher might see it differently?

TR: Well, it seems that reality, from a rational point of view, is something that you can relate to—when you're hungry you eat food, when you're cold you put on more clothes, and when you're frightened you look for a protector. Those are the kinds of real things we do. Real things happen, experiences such as that happen.

Student: Rinpoche, are you going to discuss ego at all during this seminar?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose that subject will pop up. [*Laughter*]

Student: Rinpoche, you said that you can't get out of a situation, you have to get completely into it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You have to be completely fearless. And there should be communication with the ground you're standing on. If you are in complete touch with that nowness of the ground, then all the other situations are automatically definite and obvious.

Student: Which world are you in now?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Woof, woof.

S: But you said these are not states of the awakened mind—they are only confusion!

TR: Yes, confusion. Sure. [*Laughter*]

Student: Do the six bardos go around in a circle like the six realms?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Somehow it isn't as methodical as that.

S: Is it one continuum? How does one move from one to the next?

TR: It's the same as the different types of emotions, which change from one to another, like temperament. Each bardo is individual, an independent thing, like an island; but each island has some connection with the other islands. The presence of the other islands allows us to see the perspective of any one island. So they are related as well as not related.

S: Is it the water that connects them?

TR: I think so, yes.

Student: Could you say that each experience has its root in one or another of the bardos?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, definitely.

S: Is it a good thing, as one is experiencing, to try to hold that view?

TR: Well, one doesn't have to acknowledge them on the spot necessarily, not intellectually, but from an experiential point of view, this happens and one can acknowledge it, so to speak. It is not necessarily healthy to speculate or to try to put it into categories intellectually. You see, meditation is a way of providing a clear perception of these experiences, so that they don't become confusing or inspire paranoia. Meditation is a way of gaining new eyesight to look at each situation, to feel situations. And often the hidden aspect of these states or worlds is brought out by meditation. If there's a tendency to try to hide from yourself the suppressed elements of these worlds, then meditation brings them out. If your experience is constantly destructive, then meditation brings out the friendliness in these situations and you begin to see that

you don't have to regard them as external attacks or negative destructive things anymore. Meditation is a way of seeing the perfect value of them, in a sense, the perfect relationship of them. The whole thing is that you have to work from within. Unless you are willing to go back to the abstract quality, the root, judging the facade doesn't help at all. So meditation brings you back to the root, dealing with the root of it.

Student: Does meditation mean nothing but simply sitting still quietly for forty-five minutes?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In this case, it is not necessarily only that. It's the active aspect of meditation as well as the formal sitting practice. All aspects.

Student: Everybody seems to have different interpretations or opinions as to what you feel about drug addiction or alcoholism in relation to the Buddhist path. Can you relate drug use or heavy drinking to bardo experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it seems to be connected with the idea of reality, what is real and what is not real. Everybody tries to find what is real, using all sorts of methods, all sorts of ways. A person may discover it by using alcohol or by using drugs, but then you want to make sure that discovery of reality is really definite, one hundred percent definite. So you go on and on and on. Then somehow, a sort of greediness takes over from your discovery at the beginning, and the whole thing becomes destructive and distorting.

This happens constantly with any kind of experience of life. At the beginning, there's a relationship; but if you try to take advantage of that relationship in a heavy-handed way, you lose the relationship absolutely, completely. That relationship becomes a destructive one rather than a good one. It's a question of whether the experience could be kept an actual experience without trying to magnify it. At a certain stage, you begin to forget that the usage is not pure experience alone; it begins to become a built-up situation that you require. And then there will be conflict. In terms of LSD, for instance, a person has an experience for the first time, and in order to confirm that experience he has to take LSD again—a second, third, fourth, hundredth time—and somehow it ceases to be an experience anymore. It isn't exactly a question of middle way or happy medium, but somehow trusting oneself is necessary at that

point. One doesn't have to be extremely skeptical of oneself. You have one experience, and that experience *is* experience—you don't necessarily have to try to make it into a clear and complete experience. One experience should be total experience.

Student: In meditation, how does one get these glimpses of clarity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In a sense you can create a glimpse by being open to the situation—*open* meaning without fear of anything, complete experience. A glimpse just takes place; it takes shape of its own and sparks us. But in many cases, when a person tries to re-create that glimpse he or she had already, that sudden flash, it doesn't happen at all. The more you try, the less experience you get—you don't experience open space at all. And the minute you are just about to give up, to give in and not care—you get a sudden flash. It's as if a person is trying very hard to meditate for a set time—it could be in a group or it could be alone—and it doesn't go very well at all. But the minute you decide to stop, or if it's group practice, the minute the bell is rung, *then* the meditation actually happens, spontaneously and beautifully. But when you want to recapture that, to re-create that situation, it doesn't happen anymore. So it's a question of trying to recapture experience: if you try to recapture an experience, it doesn't happen—unless you have an absence of fear and the complete confidence that these experiences don't have to be re-created, but they are there already.

S: Supposing what you think you want more than anything is openness, but you don't know how to open?

TR: There's no question of how to do it—just do it! It cannot be explained in words; one has to do it in an instinctive way. And if one really allowed oneself to do it, one could do it.

Student: People seem to want to be happy, but it doesn't work out.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Happiness is something one cannot recapture. Happiness happens, but when we try to recapture it, it's gone. So from that point of view there's no permanent happiness.

Student: Are the six worlds always happening, and do you attain them in meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, the six realms seem to happen constantly; we are changing from one extreme to another and going through the six

realms constantly. And that experience takes place in meditation practice also. Therefore, the whole idea of trying to create a fixed, ideal state of meditation is not the point. You can't have a fixed, ideal state of meditation because the situation of six realms will be continuously changing.

S: I mean, we've spent all our lives in these six realms, but through meditation we can learn to see which realm we're in, and how to deal with them?

TR: That isn't the purpose of meditation, but somehow it happens that way. Actual meditation practice is a constant act of freedom in the sense of being without expectation, without a particular goal, aim, and object. But as you practice meditation, as you go along with the technique, you begin to discover your present state of being. That is, we could almost say, a by-product of meditation. So it does happen that way, but is no good looking for it and trying to fit it into different degrees or patterns. That doesn't work.

Student: When you just perceive something—smell, hear, see—and you don't have any thought about anything for a very brief time, what world is that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Any world. Sure, any world.

Student: Are people born with a quality of one of the worlds as predominant?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems there is one particular dominant characteristic—which is not particularly good and not particularly bad, but a natural character.

Student: Would sense perceptions be the same in all six realms?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The sense perceptions will be different. We are talking about the human situation, and in human life the six experiences of the world will be the same, of course, but your impressions of them will be different. Each thing we see, we see purely in terms of our own likes and dislikes, which happen all the time, and our associations. Certain trees, plants, and things may be irritating for some people; whereas for some other people they may be a good experience.

Discussion Next Morning

Student: Would you discuss briefly the similarities and differences between Zen practice and mahamudra practice?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that has something to do with the evolutionary aspect of the teachings. The Zen tradition is the actual application of shunyata, or emptiness, practice, the heart of the mahayana teaching. Historically, the Zen method is based on dialectical principles—you engage in continual dialogues with yourself, asking questions constantly. By doing that, in the end you begin to discover that questions don't apply anymore in relationship to the answer. That is a way of using up dualistic mind, based on the logic of Nagarjuna. The interesting point is that the practice of traditional Indian logic used by Hindu and Buddhist scholars is turned into experiential logic rather than just ordinary debate or intellectual argument. Logic becomes experiential. In other words, the subject and object of logical discussion are turned into mind and its projections—and that automatically, of course, becomes meditation. Once you begin to follow the whole endless process, everything begins to become nothing—but nothing becomes everything. It's the same idea as the four statements of *Prajnaparamita:* form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form.[2] It's kind of using up the abundance of hungry energy. Or, it could be said, self-deception is exposed by realizing that you don't get any answers if you purely ask questions, but you do get answers if you don't ask questions. But that in itself becomes a question, so in the end the whole thing is dropped completely: you don't care anymore.

S: In Zen they talk about abrupt realization.

TR: That abruptness is referred to in the Zen tradition as the sword of Manjushri, which cuts through everything. It is symbolized in Zen practice by the stick (kyosaku) carried in the hall during meditation (zazen) practice. If a person wants to have sudden penetrations, or if a person is off his pattern, he's reminded by being hit on the back—the sword of Manjushri.

In the case of mahamudra, the application or the technique is not quite like the Zen approach of logic, questioning, or koans. It is, in a sense, a highly extroverted practice—you don't need inward scriptures, but you work with the external aspect of scriptures, which is the phenomenal world. Mahamudra has a cutting quality as well, but that cutting or penetrating quality is purely based on your experiential relationship with the phenomenal world. If your relationship to the phenomenal world is distorted or if you are going too far, then the sword of Manjushri—the equivalent of the sword of Manjushri, which is the

phenomenal world—shakes you and demands your attention. In other words, the situation begins to become hostile or destructive for you if you are not in tune with it, if you are dazed or if you're confused. If you are not willing to put your patience and discipline into practice, then such situations come up. In this case, mahamudra is very much purely dealing with the phenomenal world aspect of symbolism. So mahamudra practice contains a great deal of study of events or situations, seeing them as patterns rather than using logical, koan types of questions—which brings us to the same point.

These two practices are not polarities. You have to go through Zen practice *before* you get to mahamudra practice, because if you don't realize that asking questions is the way to learn something, that the questioning process is a learning process, then the whole idea of study becomes distorted. So one must learn to see that trying to struggle for some achievement or goal is useless in any way. You have to start by learning that such a dualistic notion is useless; you have to start from the Zen or mahayana tradition. And after that, you realize that asking questions is not the only way, but being a fool is the only way. If you see the foolishness of asking questions, then you begin to learn something. Foolishness begins to become wisdom.

At that point, you transform yourself into another dimension, a completely other dimension. You thought you had achieved a sudden glimpse of nonduality, but that nonduality also contains relationship. You still need to relate yourself to that sudden glimpse of beyond question. That's when you begin to become mahamudra experience. In other words, the Zen tradition seems to be based on the shunyata principle, which is a kind of emptiness and openness, absence of duality. The mahamudra experience is a way of wiping out the consciousness of the absence: you begin to develop clear perceptions beyond being conscious of the absence. If you feel that absence, voidness, or emptiness is so, then you are dwelling on something, on some kind of state of being. Mahamudra experience transcends that consciousness of being in the void. In that way every situation of life becomes play, dance. It is an extroverted situation.

I suppose you could say that Zen and mahamudra are complementary to one other. Without the one, the other one couldn't exist. As experience, first of all you clear out the confusion of duality. And then, having cleared that out, you appreciate the absence of the blindfold in

terms of appreciating colors and energies and light and everything. You don't get fascinated by it at all, but you begin to see that it is some kind of pattern. The whole process of mahamudra, in other words, is seeing the situation of life as a pattern. That's why the word *mudra* is used, which means "symbolism." It doesn't mean ordinary symbolism; it isn't a question of signifying something, but it is the actual fact of things as they are. The pattern of life *is* a pattern. It is a definite pattern, a definite path, and you learn how to walk on it. I think this particular topic needs some kind of actual experience or practice; you can't really explain it in terms of words.

S: If one is preliminary to the other, can you explain the emphasis in Zen meditation practice on posture and the lack of emphasis in mahamudra?

TR: Well, I think that the discipline which goes along with Zen practice is connected with the experience of being determined—being determined and willing to use up any dualistic notion. Therefore it is described in terms of struggle, or within the framework of discipline. Otherwise, if there were no framework around this notion of shunyata, or voidness, you wouldn't have anything at all; you wouldn't even have practice, because everything is nothing, absolute nothing. In order to bring out the notion of shunyata and voidness, you have to create a horizon, or some framework, which is discipline. That is necessary. That is what we all do in the practice of meditation: at the beginner's level, we have disciplines or techniques, something to do. In the case of mahamudra, instead of putting discipline into situations, the situations bring out discipline *for* you. If you are lax, the situation reminds you, jerks you, and you'll be pushed; if you are going too slow, if you are too careful, the situation will push you overboard.

S: Are we beginners, or are we advanced enough to disregard the techniques?

TR: It's much safer to say that we're all beginners, that we do need some act of sitting down and practicing. But, of course, the level of discipline in meditation practice is not only a conflict between mahamudra practice and the Zen tradition at all. It's also connected with different styles of teaching, such as the Theravada tradition of Southeast Asia, Tibetan Buddhism, or the Chinese tradition. Each culture effects a different tradition and style of practice. Obviously, in the Zen tradition a lot of the formality is highly connected simply with Japanese culture rather

than fundamental Buddhism. And the same thing could be said about Tibetan Buddhism as well—a lot of things came into it from the Tibetan cultural background, not from the actual teaching. Those cultural styles make a difference in some ways.

Student: Do you have to have some preparation for working in a mahamudra way? Does one have to be particularly conscious of the transition point from Zen to mahamudra?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it happens as you grow. It would be too presumptuous for teachers to say that now you're ready for mahamudra—in fact, it would be dangerous to say it. But if a student finds himself in the situation of mahamudra under the pretense of practicing Zen, he'll find himself in a mahamudra situation automatically. Then of course he'll accept that as the next process. But there wouldn't be a big deal about relaxing from one technique to another technique at all; it would become a natural process for the student.

Student: When you say "situations," do you mean the situations that arise in daily life?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I mean individual meditation experience as well as daily life and your relationship to it. Many people have heard about the principle of abhisheka and the initiations that are involved with mahamudra teachings or tantric teachings in general. But initiations aren't degrees at all; initiations are the acceptance of you as a suitable candidate for the practice. There's really only one initiation, and that's the acceptance of your whole being, your whole attitude, as suitable to practice, that you are the right type of person. Beyond that, there's no change of techniques and practices. It's not like a staircase at all; everything's a very evolutionary process. When you are on the first level, as you go along, you begin to develop possibilities and qualities of the next step. And then, as you begin to lose the idea that the first step is the only way, you begin to discover something else. You begin to grow like a tree. It is a very general process, and therefore it is very dangerous to pin down that you belong to a different type of experience, a different level.

Student: Both you and Shunryu Suzuki Roshi speak of the path as being dangerous. I always wondered what the danger is that I should be avoiding.

Trungpa Rinpoche: They are numerous. Danger is really a relative term, in terms of the relationship of ego and the relationship of being awake. The relationship of ego is regarded as a danger—the extreme or the confusion. But danger also comes from different levels of practice. Danger always comes with speed, going fast—very rarely from going too slowly. And generally we go very fast. There's the possibility that if you go too fast you will get hurt. There's the danger of going too slow as well, being too concerned and becoming ultraconservative. That's not the case in the West, particularly; it is more the case in the East. Easterners go too slowly; they don't go fast enough. In a lot of cases, according to the stories of great teachers and their relationship to students on the path, the teachers actually have to push their students overboard, kick them out. "If you hesitate to jump, then I'll push you—let's go!" That sort of hesitation is a problem of the Eastern mentality. And in the West, the problem seems to be one of going too fast, being unbalanced, bringing up pain and confusion in terms of ego.

S: If the danger is of going too fast, don't you intensify that danger for us by outlining the mahamudra practice as a superior one, because most of us tend to want to skip to a more advanced practice without experiencing fully the preliminary level?

TR: Precisely. That's the whole point. I do feel that I'm responsible for this. And precisely for that reason, in the practice of meditation I try to present everything as extremely dull and uncolorful. In fact, most people who practice meditation are going through the process of discovering that meditation practice is not a kick anymore; the whole practice is extremely dull and uninteresting. And I think we have to go through that process as well. But I don't think there is anything wrong in mentioning mahamudra. It doesn't have to be introduced as a surprise. There is this possibility if you go through it, but it needs patience and hard work—that automatically brings up a person's inspiration, which is a very great thing.

Student: Concerning the idea of different levels of hierarchies of practice, sometimes it seems like we're in all these levels at the same time.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, we are passing through the six realms of the world all the time. I mean, you pass through those different states of the world every moment or every other moment, on and off. But the gradual development we've been talking about is more definite than that.

You may have an experience of mahamudra as well as an experience of Zen happening all the time, but as your Zen practice develops, your experience of mahumudra becomes more frequent, and you develop in that way. And beyond mahamudra, your experience of maha ati also begins to develop more. The flash of that experience becomes more and more frequent, stronger, and more real.

Student: All this seems endless.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it is an extremely good thing to realize that the learning process is endless.

S: I thought you said the whole idea is to stop collecting things, but you're collecting more things.

TR: It isn't really collecting, but you're involving yourself in it. You see, the whole point is that mahamudra is not introducing a new thing or new theme, but if you reach an absolute understanding of the shunyata principle, then that *becomes* mahamudra. And when you understand completely the level of mahamudra, then that become something else. So it's a growing process. It's not collecting anything at all, but it's the way you grow. And each step is a way of unmasking yourself as well. You begin by realizing the shunyata principle and experience, and then you begin to see it as a foolish game. You begin to see the foolishness of it once you get to mahamudra experience. And once you transcend mahamudra experience, then you again begin to see that you unnecessarily fooled yourself. It's a continual unpeeling process, a continual unmasking process. So it's more of a continual renunciation than collecting anything—until there's nothing further that you have to go through, no journey you have to make. And then you begin to see that the whole journey you made was a foolish thing that you never made at all.

Student: You speak of the original understanding of voidness as something that you transcend more and more, rather than giving up one thing to proceed to another, as though you were climbing a ladder?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Each moment has possibilities or potentials of everything. Your experience of emptiness and form is empty at the beginning level as well, all the time, but somehow your experience becomes more and more deep as you go along. So in a sense it could be called a progressive process, but is not absolutely so—because all the possibilities

or potentials of the various steps are present in one moment of personal experience.

S: Is it as if the circle of one's understanding keeps enlarging and includes more and more, rather than giving up one thing to proceed to the other?

TR: Yes. It's a process of going deeper and deeper. You are unpeeling, unmasking the crude facade to start with. Then you unmask the semicrude facade; then you unmask a kind of genteel facade; and you go on and on and on. The facades become more and more delicate and more profound, but at the same time they are all facades—you unpeel them, and by doing so you include all experiences. That is why at the end of journey, the experience of maha ati is referred to as the imperial yana (vehicle or path) which sees everything, includes everything. It is described as being like climbing up the highest mountain of the world and seeing all the other mountains underneath you: you have complete command of the whole view, which includes everything in its absolute perfection.

Student: I don't understand what is meant when it's said that forms are empty. I don't understand what emptiness means.

Trungpa Rinpoche: When we talk of emptiness, it means the absence of solidity, the absence of fixed notions which cannot be changed, which have no relationship with us at all but which remain as they are, separate. And form, in this case, is more the solidity of experience. In other words, it is a certain kind of determination not to give away, not to open. You would like to keep everything intact purely for the purpose of security, of knowing where you are. You are afraid to change. That sort of solidness is form. So "Form is empty" is the absence of that security; you see everything as penetrating and open. But that doesn't mean that everything has to be completely formless, or nothing. When we talk of nothingness, emptiness, or voidness, we are not talking in terms of negatives but in terms of nothingness being everything. It's another way of saying "everything"—but it is much safer to say "nothing" at that particular level than "everything."

Student: What is the relation of kriyayoga, the Hindu practice, to mahamudra?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's the same thing. Kriyayoga, or kriyayana, is the

first tantric yana, or stage. In kriyayoga, the basic notion of absolute is presented in terms of purity. Because your discovery of the symbolism of mahamudra experience is so sharp and colorful and precise, you begin to feel that if experience is so good and accurate, it has to be pure. And that fundamental notion of purity in kriyayoga is the first discovery that such an experience as mahamudra is there. In other words, it is excitement at the discovery of mahamudra, the experience of a tremendously valuable discovery. An extra attitude of sacredness begins to develop because of your mahamudra experience. That is kriyayoga, the first step. It is the first discovery of mahamudra.

S: But kriyayoga is also a Hindu school.

TR: Buddhist and Hindu kriyayoga probably use different kinds of symbolism, iconography; but the fundamental idea of kriyayoga in the two traditions is very close, definitely close.

S: Is kriyayoga a definite technique?

TR: It is. In fact, you could almost say it is ninety-nine percent technique.

Student: Couldn't one use the expression "truthfulness" instead of "purity," since in the experience you are talking about, all pretensions are suddenly missing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, that's true.

S: So why should one get rid of it?

TR: Well, you see, there are different types of discoveries. The discovery that happens in kriyayoga is in some ways a sharp and absolute discovery, but it is still based on spiritual materialism, meaning spirituality having a reference to ego. You see, any kind of practice which encourages constant health, constant survival, is based on ego. And actually, any discovery of such a practice wouldn't be absolute truthfulness or an absolute discovery, because it would have a tinge of your version of the discovery rather than what *is*, because you're seeing through the filter of ego. Such discoveries, connected with spiritual development or bliss, are regarded as something that you should transcend.

I suppose we are talking about the definition of "absolute" and of "truth." You see, absoluteness or truth in the ultimate sense is not regarded as a learning process anymore. You just see true as true. It is *being* true, rather than possessing truth. That is the absence of ego; whereas in the case of ego, you still feel you possess truth. That doesn't mean that

you have to start absolutely perfectly. Of course you start with ego and with confusions and negatives—that's fine. Ego is the sort of ambitious quality which comes up throughout all parts of the pattern, a kind of continual, constant philosophy of survival. Ego is involved in the willpower of survival, the willpower of not dying, not being hurt. When that kind of philosophy begins to be involved with the path, it becomes negative—or confusing rather, in this case. But that doesn't mean that you wouldn't have any of these notions at all. At the beginning of the path, you have all sorts of collections, but that doesn't matter. In fact, it is very enriching to have them, to work with them. So the point is, one begins with faults, one begins with mistakes. That is the only way to begin.

S: When I think of some possible terror or pain, I think, "That's my ego." At the same time, if I get very relaxed, then I think maybe I am heading for danger, that I am not taking any precautions.

TR: One doesn't have to rely purely on blind faith or guesswork alone. Whether it is going to be dangerous or not depends on how much of a relationship to the present situation you are able to make, how much you are able to communicate with the present situation. If your relationship with the present situation is vague or confused, then something's not quite solid; whereas if your relationship is quite clear and open, then that's fine. That seems to be the criterion and judgment—standing on the ground, the earthy quality, grounding quality. I often refer to it as the peasant quality—simple, but at the same time, solid.

THREE

The Bardo of Meditation

In order to understand bardo experiences, you also have to understand basic psychology. Yesterday we discussed the six realms of the world—the world of hatred, the world of possessiveness, the world of ignorance, the world of passion, the world of speed or jealousy, and the world of pride. These different patterns or worlds are the sources of particular emotional experiences—hatred, meanness, passion, or whatever. They are the basic background; they are the space. And within that, there will be the different experiences of bardo, which work with the thought process and with different types of emotions than the emotions that you were born with, so to speak, that you are made out of. The experience of the six realms is like having a body: you have involved yourself in the world of hell or the world of the hungry ghosts. But if you have a wound on your body, that is the experience of the different types of bardo, a flash of bardo experience.

To understand bardo, we have to understand the patterns of ego as well. Our basic involvement with situations, or the six realms, and the specific situation that we are facing, or bardo, have to have some relationship. The specific development of bardo experience—in the form of a dream, in the form of birth or death, whatever it may be—also has to come from the pattern of ego. I have discussed ego previously, but perhaps it is worth going over again, in order to bring out the bardo concept properly.

The Development of Ego

When we talk of ego, it is as if we are talking about a man with a body and limbs. It has a basic makeup and it has its tentacles, so to speak, as well. Its basic makeup consists of paranoia and confusion. But at the same time, its basic makeup started from some kind of wisdom as well, because there is the possibility that we don't exist as individual entities or as solid persons who can continue all the time. There is the possibility that as individuals we consist of particles or of lots of things—but those particles don't exist as individuals either.

When that possibility first flashes onto itself, there's sudden panic. If this is the case, we'll have to put up some kind of defense mechanism to shield out any possible discovery of the nonexistence of ourselves. We begin to play the game of deaf and dumb. We would like to be individuals who are continuously existing, continuously surviving, continuously being one person, not even making the journey through time and space. Time and space may be extra attributes, but the actual basic phenomenon of our consciousness of being has to be a solid thing—that's how ego tends to see it. So the whole thing is based on a kind of dream, wishful thinking. It is based on what we would like to be rather than what we are.

That leads to paranoia as to the possible discovery of wisdom. And that paranoia begins to develop: from that paranoia you begin to experiment with extending yourself. You can't just remain constantly deaf and dumb, you also have to learn to establish your ground as deaf and dumb. That is, you extend yourself into different areas, different realms, trying to feel the situation around you—trying to project yourself and then trying to experience that. It's kind of an experimental level of feeling. So first you have the basic ignorance of refusing to see what you are, and then you have the possibility of relating to yourself through feeling.

The next stage is impulse: feeling begins to develop beyond simply trying to feel good or bad or neutral; feeling has to become more sophisticated and efficient. Therefore, impulse begins to develop along with feeling, as that efficiency, or automatic mechanism.

Next, impulse also begins to develop—into perception. You try to perceive the result of your impulse actions. A kind of self-conscious watcher develops, as the overseer of the whole game of ego.

The last development of ego is consciousness, which is the intellectual aspect of the ego: trying to put things into categories and make intellectual sense of them. We try to interpret things and their basic meanings, and we begin to see in terms of consciousness, in the sense of being conscious in relating with situations. That is the last stage in the development of ego.

From that point of view of consciousness, the idea of bardo comes through. Bardo experience presents a case of surviving, occupation—in terms of subconscious thought patterns, conscious thought patterns, dreams, birth, death, being with oneself, or the meditative state. These are the types of thought that we begin to put out.

The next situation in the development of ego is that as we develop our personal state of being, up to the point of consciousness, that consciousness not only acts in terms of our own subconscious thoughts, dreams, and such things, but also puts out particular shapes or patterns or creeds, so to speak. It puts out a sense of belonging to a particular race or a particular family. Consciousness would like to associate itself with particular types of world. That is where the six realms we discussed yesterday begin to develop. Consciousness could either begin the six types of world from the world of hell, or it could start from the world of heavenly beings. It could begin either way. That process is like buying land; we associate ourselves with a particular land, with one of the six lokas, six worlds.

Having bought that land—it doesn't matter whether the land is a hot land, the burning hotness of hell; the tropical land of human passion; the heavenly land with the clear and crystal air of pleasurable meditative states; or whatever land we associate ourselves with as natives—we still have to survive. You see, the point is, how are we going to survive? How are we going to survive as hell beings? How are we going to survive as heavenly beings? We need some mechanism of survival, some method. And that survival mechanism, or survival policy, so to speak, is that of the six types of bardo.

The Bardo of Clear Light

We could begin with the world of heaven, for instance, the realm of the gods. The world of the gods is a state of complete bliss, a spiritual state

of complete balance from a temporary point of view, a meditative state. In order to survive in that meditative state of the world of heaven, there is the experience of the clear light. In Tibetan it is called samten bardo. Samten means meditative state, in other words, complete absorption in the clear light, or the perception of luminosity. So in the world of the gods, in order to survive as they are, they have to have the highlight of meditation, like the island which remains in the middle of the river. You need this particular type of highlight of what you are, which is the clear light experience.

In terms of the ordinary experience of bardo, it has been said that the clear light experience can only happen in the moment of death, when you begin to separate from physical being. At the moment of separation between consciousness and the physical body, you begin to develop the idea of clear light as spontaneous experience. In that perception of clear light, if you are a meditator who meditated before, you begin to see the clear light and you begin to recognize it, as in the analogy of son meeting mother. But in the case of the world of heavenly beings, the clear light is a constant process.

This also brings another kind of bardo: the bardo of birth and death. When we begin to leave one kind of experience, whatever it may be, we look for the next experience to get into. And between birth and death, there is a sudden recognition that birth and death would never need to happen at all; they are unnecessary. We begin to realize that the experience of birth and the experience of death are unnecessary concepts. They just happen; they are purely perceptions, purely the result of clinging to something. We experience birth in terms of creative things and death in terms of destructive things, but those two things never need to have happened.

A sudden experience of eternity develops, which is the bardo of clear light. And this experience of eternity, beyond birth and beyond death, is the source of survival of heavenly beings in the meditative state. That's why they attain a pleasurable state in meditation, because each time their meditation experience begins to wane, the only possible kick they could get, the only possible way they have of latching on to their previous meditation experience, is to reflect back on that eternity. And that eternity brings a sudden glimpse of joy, the pleasurable state of jhana experience.

That's the bardo of clear light. In other words, the experience of the

eternity of clear light is the ultimate meditative state of ego—and the ultimate state of nothingness. You see, the point is that when we see eternity from the point of view of the world of the gods, it is an exciting thing to discover. There is tremendous hope that it is going to be the promised state of being, that you're going to be all the time like that—there is tremendous hope. On the other hand, from the awakened point of view you see that eternity means constant nothingness as well, constant space. Eternity needn't really have existed, nor do birth and death need to exist. In the absolute clear light, in the case of the awake state, when you begin to feel solidness, you automatically begin to feel the loose quality of the space as well.

The experience of clear light is extremely subtle. It is like experiencing hot and cold at the same time, extreme hot temperature and extreme cold temperature simultaneously. You could appreciate either side. If you'd like, you could believe in hot, although you experience both hot and cold simultaneously; or if you want to believe in the cold, you could believe in that as well, because it is also intense. The whole thing is based on this: believing is, in fact, solidifying the experience of the bardo of clear light. So clear light could present itself as egohood, or clear light could present itself as the awakened state of mind.

This is described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as the after-death experience of seeing peaceful and wrathful divinities. The pattern is as follows: you always get peaceful divinities as your first experience, and then wrathful divinities are the next experience. This, again, is the same analogy as the idea of experiencing hot and cold simultaneously. If you have experienced the more pleasant aspect, the pleasurable aspect of the eternity of clear light as peaceful divinities, then automatically, if you are too relaxed in that pleasurable situation, the next situation brings dissatisfaction and wakes you up. Eternity begins to develop an impermanent quality, or the voidness quality of open space. That is the first experience of bardo, which is connected with the world of heavenly beings.

The clear light bardo could also relate with our own experience of meditation as well. The perception of meditation becomes promising: that promise could become the equivalent of eternity as experienced in the world of the gods, or else that promise could mean that there's no goal anymore, that you are experiencing that the promise is already the goal as well as the path. That is a kind of shunyata experience of the

nonexistence of the journey—but at the same time you are still treading on the path. It is an experience of freedom.

Student: Does one have any choice at all? If you have some kind of eternity experience and then you feel satisfaction, is there anything you can do about that except recognize that you felt that satisfaction?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, the funny thing is that once you begin to recognize it, once you begin to be satisfied with it, that automatically invites dissatisfaction. Because you are trying to solidify it, that means that you feel some kind of threat, automatically. So you can't really secure that experience, but you can just experience it and let things develop in a natural process. As soon as you experience eternity as safe and solid, you are going to experience the other aspect as well.

S: That's when ego is involved?

TR: When ego is involved, yes. Ego's ultimate dream is eternity, particularly when eternity presents itself as meditation experience.

S: So where there's hope, there's fear?

TR: That, I would say, is the heart of the heavenly world, the world of the gods.

Student: You said when *you* experience eternity—it seems to remain a subjective experience. How are you sure that this *is* eternity, not some game you are playing with yourself? Is there a verification, perhaps by you?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There doesn't seem to be any way at all to prove it and to definitely make sure. The mirage is more vivid than the desert.

S: There seems to be no feedback—in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* or in the way you explain it—that you really have anything other than what you imagine you have.

TR: In every situation of life, particularly the world of the mind, hallucinations and colors and temperatures are the world—that's all. If you're trying to look back and find real eternity, you find just mind, that's all. Just pure mind, that's all. That is why bardo is referred to as an in-between period. It's something you go through between two intervals rather than a permanent thing. That is why the whole idea of what I'm trying to say is no-man's-land rather than somebody's land, because you can't build a permanent residence on no-man's-land.

Student: Rinpoche, what is a hallucination?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, we could almost ask, what isn't a hallucination? I mean, the things we see and perceive are there because we see and perceive. So the real reassurance of absolute proof is because we saw it.

Student: If one is completely absorbed in the eternity, then how could one remember that it's a passing experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Eternity experience in this case is not eternal. It's a glimpse of eternity—then there will be a moment to appreciate the eternity, then there will be the eternity experience, and then there will be a gap to appreciate the eternity. It is like an artist painting, and then stepping back and appreciating it or criticizing it.

Student: If everything is in the mind, yet we can have experiences of the truth occasionally of which we are absolutely convinced. That truth is an expression of one's own being.

Trungpa Rinpoche: There is something to that. And that something has to do with the distance of the projections. You judge whether you're experiencing something or not by the distance of the projections. From this point of view, there's no such thing as absolute truth; on the other hand, everything is true.

Student: Bardo seems to be the ultimate extension of ego—what's the relation of that to the awakened state? In your analogy of the water and the islands, what is the bridge to the awakened state—the mountain?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a very important point, seeing bardo as the path to the enlightened state. On each particular island, bardo is the highest point. In other words, it is the embodiment of the whole experience of each different realm. For instance, in terms of the world of the gods, eternity is the highest point of ego's achievement. And because it is the highest point of ego's achievement, therefore it is close to the other side as well, to the awakened state.

Student: When we're talking about the path to the awakened state, it is almost as if it is all something that has to occur within *us*, as if what is happening with other people is somehow less relevant and not really worth paying attention to. But you yourself seem to maintain yourself

on the path by perpetual response to *other* people, almost as if you're forgetting about yourself. Can you describe the path in terms of your own experience, which is more like constantly responding to other people? It seems as if you don't pay much attention to developing yourself as you suggest that we do.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a good one. I think it's happening in exactly the same way in the case of others as well, because it is necessary for you to relate with others or to relate with me. I mean, you can't develop through the path without relationships—that's the fundamental point. But meditation becomes the starting point of relating; you learn how to create the right environment in order to relate to yourself. In terms of my own experience, that learning process takes place constantly, all the time, in terms of working with other people. You see, that's the point when you regard yourself as officially teaching other people. When you regard yourself as a student on the path, that student would gain certain experiences and ideas by himself, through practicing meditation, going on retreat, being with himself, as well as by being with his version of the world. But he wouldn't share his experience with others as much as a teacher would. That's a very dangerous point, when you begin to work with other people as a teacher. Unless you are willing to learn from students—unless you regard yourself as a student and the students as your teacher—you cease to become a true teacher. You only impart your experience of what you've been taught, a package deal. And having done that, there's no more to say—unless you just repeat yourself again and again.

S: Your life seems to be so concentrated, in terms of practicing in regard to other people's needs. But we seem to bypass that worldly side—we forget about practicing the perfections (paramitas) and just get into the meditation; whereas in your life you are always practicing the perfections.

TR: The whole point is that it would be dangerous purely to try to imitate me, and it would be dangerous for me to try to make other people into replicas of me. That would be a very unhealthy thing.

S: But aren't there fundamental teachings in Buddhism about how people can best relate to each other on a daily basis? Those teachings seem to be forgotten on account of the fact that they are so rule-oriented.

TR: You see, what we are trying to do here is to start purely with the

practice of meditation. From that base, you begin to feel the need or the relevance of the other aspect, as you encounter all sorts of temptations. And then discipline based on individual conviction comes through.

S: I'm reading Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, which you spoke of so highly in your foreword, and repeatedly he quotes the sutras as being step-by-step: you can't practice the perfections until you've found a teacher; you can't practice the second perfection until you've mastered the first, and at the end of those perfections he gets into meditation.[3] But you don't tell us much about the practice of patience in everyday life, or charity, or strenuousness.

TR: In actual fact, in following the path you have to have a commitment at the beginning, like taking refuge and surrendering yourself, and the basic practice of meditation always happens right at the beginning. The kind of meditation that Gampopa talks about is the fifth paramita, dhyana, or meditation. Dhyana is the highest meditative state the bodhisattvas achieve—which is different from the basic meditation of beginning practitioners. You see, in terms of patience and generosity and the other paramitas, the conflicts of life bring them out in any case. One doesn't have to make big speeches about them. People find that meditation is all the time painful or difficult, and then they look for something. They begin to realize that something is wrong with them or they begin to find that something is developing in them. And these kinds of meditation in action we've been talking about, the six paramitas or disciplines, happen as a natural process. The pain of meditation takes on the pattern of discipline—you find that you are running too fast and you need patience to slow down, and if you don't do that, automatically you are pushed back, something happens. A lot of people begin to find that they are facing a lot of problems if they've done something not in accordance with the pattern. And if you were a scholar, for instance, or a sociologist of Buddhism, you could try to match their experiences with the technical aspects of the teaching. But there's no point trying to prove such an interpretation, anyway.

S: Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* provides an outline of the bodhisattva's career. Is it helpful to us to study that, or is it a hindrance?

TR: What do you mean by *study*? Practicing?

S: Reading the book.

TR: It is definitely an inspiration. I have recommended that most people read Gampopa, and we have also discussed bodhisattva actions. And

each time I have interviews with people, almost without fail some aspect of aggression which they find a conflict with always comes up. And the bodhisattva activity of generosity and compassion comes up automatically, as a natural process.

Student: Is sex the human equivalent of eternity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Sex? I don't think so. Sex is somehow too practical. It is governed purely by physical experience, whereas eternity is connected with imagination. Eternity has a very dreamlike quality; it has no reality, no physical action, and no involvement with earth. It's purely living on imagination and dream world. I would say it is more like wish or hope.

S: How about when you're creating something, making a form or something? Is eternity something like that kind of creative ecstasy?

TR: I think so, yes. The pleasure of producing something. Meditation is something like that.

Student: In the clear light experience, how does one recognize whether it is egohood or the awakened state?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There's a very faint, very subtle distinction between the two. When you begin to see the sudden glimpse but it's not eternity—it's all-encompassing rather than eternity—then that's the awakened state of clear light. Whereas if you begin to see all this not as all-pervading but as something definite, solid, and eternal, then that's the ego inclination.

Student: In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* it seems that they talk about the clear light as reality, but you talk of it as the ultimate ego experience. Is seeing it as eternity like seeing something which is more familiar? That seemed to be in there too, in the description of clear light experience as being like a son recognizing his mother.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's beyond ego's range, the notion of son meeting mother.

S: Does the complete human ego continue after the experience of death and then go through the bardo states in the process of its disintegration?

TR: I don't think so. Somehow it continues through all those experi-

ences. I mean, you might have an experience of egolessness, but at the same time, beyond that experience, ego continues.

S: Even past the bardo state?

TR: Past the bardo state.

S: And it's the same ego as right now?

TR: Well, that's difficult to say. It wouldn't be the same anyway, would it?

Student: The distinction you made between the egotistical experience of the clear light and the awakened experience seems to me to be partially a difference in emphasis between time and space. The experience of ego involves the notion of endless time, and the awakened experience seems to involve all the spacious aspects.

Trungpa Rinpoche: In terms of ego, it seems that space and time are very solid. In terms of awake experience, the time concept is very loose. In other words, in terms of ego there's only one center and the radiation from it; in terms of beyond ego, center is everywhere and radiation is everywhere. It's not one center, but it is all-pervading.

S: Is it a particular trick of ego to see things in terms of time?

TR: In the ordinary sense of ego, there's very little understanding of time. Ego's understanding of time is purely based on desire, what you would like to see, what you would like to develop. It's sort of wishful.

Student: Is the clear light something you see? The way I see you now? Is it something you see with your eyes, or is that a metaphor?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It should be quite obvious that when we talk of clear light as all-pervading, you can't see all-pervading. I know that there is a book on psychedelic experience and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which talks about some kind of glimpse of light that you experience.[4] But in actual fact, when we talk in terms of the awakened state of mind, that doesn't mean that Buddha never sleeps. That he is *awake* doesn't mean he's devoid of sleepiness—he sleeps and he eats and he behaves like any other person.

S: It's easy to correlate the awakened state and clear light as verbal approaches to something that can't be discussed, but the subsequent lights which are described in terms of blues and reds and such sound so visual. I never had that kind of visual experience.

TR: They are metaphors. For instance, we talk in terms of a person's

face turning red when he's angry, that doesn't just mean the color of his complexion turns crimson; it's a metaphor. It's the same thing in the text, which speaks in terms of colors: the color of emotions, the clear light, and many other experiences. It is very complicated. Particularly when you get further into the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it begins to describe all sorts of different divinities and iconographical details—and all these colors and shapes and symbolism are connected purely with one's state of mind. If a person is open enough to his own state of being, completely absorbed in it, you could almost say the experience becomes tangible or visual—it's so real, in that sense. It's that point of view.

S: For example, to experience these colors and forms, is it relevant whether or not your eyes are open?

TR: I don't think so. I don't think so at all. In any case, if you experience them in the bardo after death, you leave your body behind.

Student: When you were talking about ego as having the experience of eternity as something solid and then nothingness afterward, you used the analogy of hot and cold. I started to think about the Chinese yin-yang symbol and the knot of eternity, trying to flash back and forth between the space, the light, and the so-called form.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I tried to explain the aspect of experiencing hot and cold *simultaneously*, the possibility of two experiences coming at the same time, both confused and awake. In fact, that seems to be the whole idea of bardo altogether, being in no-man's-land, experiencing both at the same time. It's the vividness of both aspects at the same time. When you are in such a peak of experience, there is the possibility of absolute sanity and there is also the possibility of complete madness. That is being experienced simultaneously—in one situation, one second, one moment. That seems to be the highlight of bardo experience, because bardo is in between the two experiences.

S: Does it have something to do with letting go in that instant when you decide which one you'll plop back into? In other words, when the thing is over, you either end up awakened or back in samsara.

TR: Yes.

S: So it seems like you're given a chance, and if you miss, somehow you're back in samsara.

TR: Your actual practice in everyday situations, when those peak experiences are not present, brings them into a balanced state. If your

general pattern of life has developed into a balanced state of being, then that acts as a kind of chain reaction enforcing the bardo experience. In other words, you have more balanced possibilities of sanity because of your previous chain reactions.

S: It's like the base of a mountain—the broader and more solid your base, the stronger and taller you stand.

TR: Quite. Yes.

S: So that's what sitting meditation is all about.

TR: Yes. I mean, that's the whole idea of bardo being an important moment. I think that working on basic sanity provides tremendous possibilities. It is basic—there will be tremendous influence and power, needless to say.

Student: Do you have to go through the bardo to get to the awakened state?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There will be some moment of experience, peak of experience, before the awakened state of mind. That is called bardo. It is not particularly that bardo is special, but it's just that the gap is called bardo.

S: It may not be anything special, but when we see it coming, we say, "Wow, that's it."

TR: Well, I wouldn't make a particularly big deal of it—although we are holding a seminar on it.

Student: There is something that continues after death, and I guess that something is the you that reincarnates.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Nobody knows. But if you see it in terms of the present situation, experiences happen; they pass through continuously. Our physical situation can't prevent the psychological experience of pain or pleasure—it's beyond control. So if we work back from that level, there seems to be the possibility that even beyond physical death there will be continuity of consciousness throughout—but that's an assumption.

Student: If you finally reach the awakened state, you're released from having to come back—I've heard this in Hindu thought.

Trungpa Rinpoche: There is the same idea in Buddhism as well—if you use up your karmic chain reactions and if you use up your karmic seeds, then you are no longer subject to the power of karma, returning to the

world. But then, of course, if you are that advanced a person, naturally the force of compassion forces you out, to come back and help other people. So in any case you come back, it seems.

Student: In talking about time, you said that time was an invention, a wishful thought, that it was related to hope. But time is also related to fear, because time moves us up to death. Is it true, then, that if one manages to give up both fear and hope, one is also released from time?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, time is a concept, obviously, and you transcend concepts. I would say so, definitely.

S: But one doesn't have to be awake to understand the concept of time, because in ordinary everyday life one sees that time is very unreal. Sometimes there are five days that seem like five years; other times there are five years that seem like five days.

TR: If you look at it from a rational point of view, it is determined by your preoccupations. They determine the length of time. But that isn't exactly transcending time in terms of freedom; that is simply the degree of your determination, your preoccupation. If something is pleasurable, it passes very quickly; if something is painful, it lasts an extremely long period. And certain people have a kind of noncaring quality, feeling that time doesn't matter; they are completely easy about it. But that again is purely habitual rather than a fundamental idea of time. You see, time means struggle, or wish. It's a demand for something—you have a particular concept or desire to achieve something within a certain limit of time. When you don't have this desire to achieve something or desire not to do something, then somehow the limitation of time doesn't become important. But you can't say that you completely transcend time, in terms of transcending karmic seeds or karmic patterns. Even the awakened state of mind of compassion and wisdom, in communicating and dealing with other people, still has to use the concept of time. But at the same time, *your* version of time doesn't last any longer; that fundamental, centralized notion of time doesn't exist anymore.

Student: You spoke of compassion as being a force that brings us back, insists that we reincarnate again. Is that the same as when we are feeling bliss in meditation and we do not want to stop and go back to everyday activities, but out of our sense of duty to our friends, we do?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Any kind of awake experience you have should

have sharpness or intelligence as well. I don't think there will be possibilities of being completely dazed in the experience at all—if that's so, then something must be wrong. You see, when you are completely involved in the awake state of mind, you develop discriminating wisdom as well as the wisdom of equanimity.

S: You are here out of compassion. Are we here out of that same compassion?

TR: I hope so.

S: I never experienced any sharp, clear choice to stay in the world for the sake of others.

TR: Perhaps you feel that you are not ready to help others yet.

S: I feel I have no choice but to be in the world.

TR: That's generally how things operate: you have no choice. You are bound by karma; you have no choice.

S: Is there an alternative state where the awakened person constantly has the option of being in the world or out of it?

TR: Well, if an awakened person is not bound by karmic duties, so to speak, then of course there is that option, definitely. Even the arhats, who have achieved the equivalent of the sixth stage of the bodhisattva path, supposedly have the option of not stepping back into the world, because they have transcended certain karmic seeds. They remain for kalpas and kalpas (eons) in the meditative state until a certain Buddha comes to the world. He has to send his vibrations to wake them up and bring them back to the world and encourage them to commit themselves to the bodhisattva path of compassion, not to stay out.

S: You mean you can leave if you don't feel a strong enough duty to others?

TR: That would mean that it was a partial kind of enlightened state. A fully enlightened state automatically would have compassion, whereas a partially enlightened state would have wisdom without compassion; and in this case, you quite likely would stay away.

S: Is remaining in nirvana for kalpas something worth shooting for?

TR: That's purely up to you.

Student: I have a question about the difference between buddhahood and egohood in the six bardos. At certain times I've experienced leaving this situation, a kind of transcending, but there's still a center, a source of radiation. But at a certain point, if I'm willing to let go further, it seems to break loose into a more spacious quality without this center.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you get a potential glimpse of that constantly. All aspects are in individuals all the time, and you do experience that, yes. But that doesn't necessarily mean that one has reached higher degrees; more likely, a person is able to see the potential in himself.

Student: How would you relate the déjà-vu experience to the six bardos, the feeling that you have been someplace before?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Before?

S: [*Repeats*]

TR: I suppose that experience is within the six realms of the world.

Student: Would you translate *bardo* again?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Bar means "in-between" or "gap" or "the middle," and *do* means "island," so altogether *bardo* means "that which exists between two situations." It is like the experience of living, which is between birth and death.

S: What is not bardo?

TR: The beginning and the end. [*Laughter*]

Student: Can there be wisdom without compassion or compassion without wisdom? Can either exist independently?

Trungpa Rinpoche: According to the teachings as well as one's own personal experience, it is quite possible you could have wisdom without compassion, but you couldn't have compassion without wisdom.

Student: I know somebody who almost doesn't sleep at all, he sleeps sometimes one hour a day, and he leads a frightfully energetic life. He's not a Buddhist, but he's a rather enlightened person—is that at all relevant?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I don't know about that. You see, ultimately there are certain requirements for the physical being, as long as you have a physical body—like sleeping and food. It's a natural process. And of course there's the balance of whether you need a great deal of sleep or a great deal of food, which depends on whether a person is using sleep or food as an escape, or in some other way. I mean, from a rational point of view, one would presume that enlightened beings would eat balancedly, sleep normally. They wouldn't have to fight with the pattern

of their life anymore, whether it was sleep or food. It just happens, I suppose. But that's pure guesswork on my part.

S: I think I've read somewhere that if one is really relaxed one sleeps more efficiently, so one doesn't need much sleep.

TR: Generally you need very little sleep. It depends on your state of mind. But you need some sleep anyway, and you need some food. On the other hand, there's the story of the great yogi Lavapa in India: he slept for twenty years, and when he woke up he attained enlightenment.

Student: What do you mean when you say that no one knows about the after-death period? I thought all bodhisattvas would know, all those who have returned.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think they would have confidence, definitely, and they would have some definite intuitions about it, or quite possibly memories of their previous lives. But in the ordinary case, nobody knows; nobody has actually gone through it, like a journey.

S: In other words, for a bodhisattva, all his lives aren't just like one life, just one change after another?

TR: It wouldn't be as clear as that for a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva still works with situations; therefore he works with his own life and death, and his physical being as well.

FOUR

The Bardo of Birth

YESTERDAY WE DISCUSSED the world of the gods and the particular point of eternity—involvement with eternity. That whole idea comes from an approach to spiritual practice which is based on the principles of ego. In such a spiritual trip, you tend to reach a peak point in which you do not know whether you are following a spiritual path or whether you are going completely mad, freaking out. That is the point of the bardo of meditation, or samten bardo. You worked so hard to get something—eternal promise, eternal blessing—and you begin to feel that you are achieving something; but at the same time you are not quite certain whether that achievement is imaginary, based on self-deception. That doubt brings madness. Conviction is part of the pattern which leads you to the madness, conviction based purely on relating with ego. Whenever we talk about bardo principles, we can apply the same analogy that I used yesterday: experiencing both hot and cold water being poured on you simultaneously. That pattern, which is pleasurable and at the same time extremely painful, continues with all six types of bardo.

The second bardo is connected with the realm of the jealous gods, the asuras. According to the teaching, it is described as the bardo of birth or, in Tibetan, kye-ne bardo. *Kye* means "birth," and *nye* means "dwelling." So kye-ne bardo is the birth and dwelling aspect of bardo. This experience of birth and dwelling is based on speed and on our trust in speed. It is based on living and dwelling on that particular state of being, which is our own individual experience of speed, aggression, and that which brings speed, the ambition to achieve something. In this case, the

bardo experience is not necessarily a meditative state of spiritual practice, but it is an ordinary everyday life situation. You put out a certain amount of speed constantly, yet you are not quite certain whether you are getting anything out of it or whether you are losing something. There is a certain peak point of confusion or hesitation, uncertainty. It is as if you are going too far. If you spin really fast, faster and faster—if you spin fast enough—you are not quite certain whether you're spinning or not. You are uncertain whether it is stillness or whether it is absolute speed that drives you. Absolute speed seems to be stillness.

This, again, is exactly the same point as in the bardo of meditation: that uncertainty as to sanity or madness. You see, we come to this same problem all the time—whenever we have some peak experience of aggression, hatred, passion, joy, pleasure, or insight. In whatever we experience, there's always some kind of uncertainty when we are just about to reach the peak of the experience. And when we reach the peak point, it is as though we were experiencing both hot and cold water at the same time. There is that kind of uncertainty between the fear of freaking out and the possibility of learning something or getting somewhere. I'm sure a lot of us have experienced that; it is a very simple and experiential thing. I would like you to have a clear perception of the bardo experience, both theoretically and experientially. Particularly those who feel they have experienced so-called satori have felt this experience. We are always uncertain whether we have actually achieved something or whether we are just about to freak out. And this very faint line between sanity and insanity is a very profound teaching in regard to the experience of bardo and Buddhist teachings in general.

According to history, at the very moment of enlightenment, Buddha experienced hosts of maras both attacking him with aggression and trying to seduce him with beautiful girls. That is a peak point, or moment of bardo experience. The point is that once we have achieved some higher state, a so-called higher state or more profound state of something, the negative aspect, or the mara aspect, is also going to be there—equally, exactly the same. And they both become more subtle. The subtleties of awakeness are exactly the same as the subtleties of sleepiness or confusion. Such subtleties continue all the time, side by side. Therefore, samsara and nirvana are like two sides of a coin. They occur together in one situation, simultaneously.

Such bardo experiences happen all the time with us. We don't have to

have a peak experience or a dramatic experience—in ordinary everyday situations as well, we are not quite certain whether we are learning something or whether we are missing something. There is that particular point of doubt. If you are more paranoid, you will think you are missing something; if you are more confident, you will think you are learning something. But there is also the awareness of the learning and missing qualities occurring simultaneously in experiences all the time. This experience is very common and very obvious. In many cases, we don't have to ask any more questions: what is real, what is not real; what is safe, what is not safe. But when we are just about to approach safety, we are not quite certain whether it is really true safety or not. There is some faint suspicion of danger; at the same time we feel tremendous safety. The more we feel tremendous safety, the more we feel danger. That double take takes place all the time. It is a kind of supposing, or looking back again. That is the basic experiential factor connected with bardo.

Student: What's a good attitude to take to that ambiguity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, at that point you can't control the situation—you are the situation. So it depends on the technique or practice that you have already gained experience in. It really depends on that. You can't correct or change course at all. In fact, the idea of a change of course doesn't occur at that particular moment because you are so much into it: you are the situation rather than the situation being something external.

Student: Is there any difference between the feeling of confusion and the feeling of confidence?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is the same thing. The same experience happens at exactly the same level. Fundamentally, at an experiential level, our perception is extremely fantastic and possesses all sorts of attributes. It is really fantastic to discover that perception has such a wide range, as well as a narrow range and a penetrating range. It has the capability of seeing a hundred things at the same time. That is why things are referred to as wisdom and things are referred to as confusion.

That's a very important point. It is really the key point when we talk about madness and about sanity. It is extremely important. Everybody should know that that is *one* point, rather than that you belong to either of those groups. You don't have to belong in order to become mad or in

order to become wise or liberated. You don't have to associate yourself with either the good or the bad, but you become the one. And that one possesses both good and bad simultaneously. That's a very important point in terms of experience. It is extremely necessary to know that.

S: Whenever that happens, I feel there's something wrong. Doubt always occurs—always, always, always.

TR: Yes. It occurs always.

S: So there's no point expecting it to diminish?

TR: No. You don't have to make the distinction as to whether you belong to that group or to this group, but you see the situation as it is—that's the important point. You can't change that particular situation at all. You can only divert it through some kind of chain reaction process: you can impose your experience prior to that by becoming familiar with sanity or, equally, by becoming familiar with madness or insanity. Either way is safe and instructive, and either of them could be said to be insight. And then one-pointedness switches you into the awake or enlightened state automatically.

S: Is that awake state free of doubt or uncertainty?

TR: Yes, of course. The reason it is free of doubt is that there's so much reinforcement from what you have already worked with before that experience. You are quite familiar with what you've gone through. But I would like to say something else on this particular point. That is, when we talk about self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-observing—often that self-observing awareness is negative. When you try to work on self-observing or self-awareness in a self-consciousness way, then the reason you're being self-aware is that you are purely trying to ward off danger. It is sort of a conservative attitude.

In the general philosophy of conservatism, you don't think about what could go right, or what is the best thing for you to do; often the inspiration of conservatism starts with what could go wrong with you, what's a bad thing to do. Because of that, you give guidance to other people in a conservative way, saying "I am trying to talk to you in terms of safe and sound, so that what you're doing is not a mistake." The first statement comes from a negative view: ". . . so that what you are doing is not a mistake." That approach to the fundamental basic subtlety of self-awareness is not looking at the positive and healthy aspect of that state of mind, but constantly aggravating the negative "What could go wrong?" state of mind. That could pile up in the process of the path.

And it's quite likely that when such a person is in the peak state of mind of both sanity and insanity happening simultaneously, then the immediate first flicker of mind will reflect back naturally to what's bad, that sense of paranoia. Then you could flip back into madness. It sounds quite dangerous.

Student: Do you have to be a warrior?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I think the point is that you are willing to see the creative aspect rather than the negative aspect. The whole process is one of going along rather than looking back at each step.

Student: Is this doubt a result of an impending sense that the peak experience is going to deteriorate and return to a less profound state of consciousness, or is it a result of a sense that perhaps the peak experience won't end, and you won't return?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think you will return. Once you've had it, you've had it. That doesn't mean to say there will be only one peak experience. There will be a succession of peak experiences—which happens with us anyway, all the time. I'm not talking purely theoretically. In our own experience of everyday life, flashes happen all the time, peak experiences. Doubt is not being able to match yourself with a prescribed goal. Whenever there is doubt, you also have an ideal concept of the absence of doubt, which is the goal.

Student: Is this particular experience between sanity and insanity ever resolved by what's known as surrendering or openness to the guru?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I would say both yes and no. You see, at that very moment nobody can save you. At the same time, at that very moment, things could be inspired—somebody could push you overboard. Both situations are possible. But fundamentally nobody can save you. You have to make your own commitment to the situation, that's for sure.

S: Then there's no surrendering.

TR: Surrendering happens early on. If you surrender, that means you are associating yourself with positive experiences and you are not trying to hold back and be careful and conservative, as I have been saying. Surrendering to the guru is a very positive thing; therefore, it proceeds with inspiration rather than by holding back and checking the danger. You see, the idea of the term *surrender* is that once you surrender—that's the

whole thing! You don't surrender because of something. Surrendering to the guru is quite different from an insurance policy. In the case of an insurance policy, you write down a list of all sorts of dangers, up to the point of the will of God or "acts of God."

Student: You talked about the nirvanic and the samsaric worlds as being coexistent. Autobiographically speaking, I am very much aware that in certain chemical states the reality of the world of physics is revealed to me, the world of wave patterns and whirling molecules and whatnot. It seems to me this world, which modern physics has revealed to us, very often is equated with the nirvanic state, where you as an ego, as a separate item, cannot exist. Do you see the nirvanic state as I described it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The state of nirvana or freedom cannot be described in any way. If you are trying to describe it, then you are involved with wishful thinking of some kind more than natural reality—because immediately when you begin to describe it, you are separating the experience from the experiencer. Nirvana is something quite different from that.

S: But people still say they have seen nirvana, so they must have been aware of something.

TR: Yes, definitely.

S: Then the split remains. As you come out of nirvana, there is a moment where your senses react to the high state you've been in and say, "I come from nirvana."

TR: Once you've gotten into it, you are in it already—you can't come out of it.

Student: Is there only one bardo experience associated with each world, or is it possible to have any of the bardo experiences in any of the worlds?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes. Yesterday we discussed the bardo experience associated with the world of the gods, and today we have been discussing the bardo connected with the world of the asuras, or jealous gods. Each bardo experience is connected with a particular sphere, so to speak, or world.

S: Then there's a one-to-one correspondence between bardos and worlds?

TR: Yes, but these corresponding experiences happen irregularly within one's own experience, all the time. You may begin with hell and continue with the world of human beings. From the world of human beings you could go back to the world of the pretas, the hungry ghosts, and so on. This could happen continuously. The whole point I'm trying to make is that bardo experience is a peak experience where you are not quite certain whether you have completely gone mad or you are just about to receive something. That particular peak point is the bardo experience. And the bardo experience cannot be resolved unless there is training. Without lifelong training in the practice of meditation and in accordance with the practice of meditation, putting the skillful actions of a bodhisattva into practice, you cannot have a complete bardo experience.

Student: Rinpoche, what is madness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a good question. At the experiential level, madness begins with some kind of confusion between the experience of reality and the experience of the perceiver of reality, a conflict between the two. Then, further on, one tends to go on with that confusion and try to discover some ultimate answer to pinpoint what is reality and what is the perceiver of the reality. You try and you struggle more and more—up to the point where you cannot discover the answer unless you give up the idea of the existence of both the experiencer *and* the experience.

At that level, you are so overwhelmed by such experiences that you make up all sorts of ways of convincing yourself. You either try to rationalize that there is such a thing as a self, that things outside are dangerous or seductive, and that "me" is the rightful person to experience that. Or, on the other hand, you begin to feel that you are out of control. Then you become ultimately mad.

You are so confused as to what is the experiencer and what is the experience. The whole thing is completely amalgamated into the one or the many. It is confusion between the one and the many. You don't have the earth-grounding process of seeing "that" as opposed to "this" anymore at all, because the whole thing is so overwhelming. You are completely sucked into it. You have all sorts of experiences of being claustrophobic, because the whole situation around you is so overwhelming. You experience paranoia because such overwhelming experience could try to suffocate you, destroy you, destroy the experiencer.

And at the same time you would like to act as though nothing happened. You begin to play the game of deaf and dumb, but you pretend you actually never heard of it. Hundreds of millions of tactics begin to develop because of this overwhelming suddenness, this overwhelming crowdedness.

S: Is it possible to achieve enlightenment without becoming mad?

TR: We are mad anyway, in different degrees. We may not become completely mad unless we are maniacs—religious maniacs or political maniacs, whatever—unless we lose control of the situation. We have a sort of medium madness going on all the time, with the possibility of absolute madness. You see, that is samsara—madness. And that which is not madness is called enlightenment. Because such an idea as madness exists, therefore automatically there is that which is not madness, which is enlightenment. So once you begin to talk about enlightenment, or freedom, that means you are speaking in terms of madness.

Student: Rinpoche, it seems that one thing you were saying is that when you approach this peak experience of the bardo, if you're not prepared for it, it's too sudden and you go mad.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That seems to be the point, yes. That's the whole idea of why we mention bardo at all, because it is connected with the teachings, with the path.

Student: Could you describe the bardo in the asura world again? I don't have any feeling for that at all.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is trying to give birth and at the same time trying to dwell on it. Suddenly, at the peak experience, you try to force things—you try to push your situation because you are about to reach some experience. That experience is pushed by a certain effort, extreme effort, and you would like to retain that particular effort.

S: You mean like a woman trying to give birth and keep the baby at the same time?

TR: Exactly. Yes. It is so action-conscious.

S: Is it a sense of having too much energy?

TR: Too much energy, yes, because the ground for this particular bardo of birth and dwelling is the realm of the asuras. The whole environment of the jealous god realm is very much action-conscious, all the time rushing. But you get more than that action at the asura level, you

get a peak experience: you have to push yourself into some particular peak experience, and you would like to hold on to that, grasp it.

Student: If you see somebody going crazy, is there anything you can do, or should you just leave them alone? They might be destroying themselves or trying to destroy others.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You can do a great deal. But to start with, it is better not to do anything at all. It is better not to try to use any system or psychological school or concept—Freudian, Jungian, Buddhist, Christian, or whatever. You see, one problem is that when we come across somebody who is absolutely mad, our immediate response is to try to do something with them, rather than trying to understand the basic ground. So you have to allow yourself space and not allow the situation to be completely controlled by them. You should allow space and not associate with any category of philosophical or psychological school.

You should not analyze at all—that's the last thing you would like to do. That's the source of what's been wrong in the past. Without trying to fit things into pigeonholes of that category or this category, but with an open mind, you can relate with the situation of the moment—the person, the background of the person, as well as *your* own state of mind, whether that situation is your imagination or whether it actually exists independent of your imagination.

From that level, once you get a clear perception of the situation, then you can proceed to relate with the person. You can do a great deal, because generally madness is the ultimate concept of frustration, and frustration needs to work, or communicate, with some kind of external situation. Even though the person who is in a state of madness appears to be completely, absolutely incommunicative, absolutely going wild—at the same time, the wildness depends on the external situation, or the internal situation of mind being sparked up by the external situation. So nothing could be said to be completely impersonal. In other words, the point is not to relate with that person as an impersonal thing, but as something still living and continuing. In that way you will be able to relate with the person and go along with the situation.

Another important point is not to be either too compassionate and gentle or too aggressive. You should be aware of the "idiot compassion" aspect of being too kind, and at the same time, you should be aware of laying your trip on the other person. It is an individual matter and you

should work along with it. These little details can't be generalized; they depend on the individual situation. But you can do great deal to help. There is a moment when you should let the person be what they are, and there also will be a moment when you shouldn't let them be what they are. That is individual inspiration, how you relate with that person. It also depends on how much space you allowed at the beginning, that you didn't rush in immediately.

S: I saw somebody who wanted to stick their hand in a fire to prove that they could withstand pain, and it was a thing for me to watch their hand swell up like a marshmallow. Then I had to say, "No, you can't do that."

TR: Well, you use your basic common sense. Actually, there is a particular mentality involved when you are dealing with people like that: the whole thing is regarded as a game. You analyze the person's every activity and appreciate its symbolic quality, and you let them do what they like. But completely letting the person do what they like is somehow too self-indulgent. One should use some common sense in the process, definitely. In other words, one should not expect any miracles. If a person says he can't feel heat and his hand is invincible, that person is trying to imagine himself as more than he is. Quite possibly he would like to become what he imagines he should be rather than what he is, and one should realize that situation. The earth-grounding quality is very important.

Student: How can you respond when a maniac attacks you?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You can stop it, generally speaking. But you have to deal with it individually, whether the person is attacking in order to get some reaction from you or because he would like to release himself. It depends on the situation.

S: Sometimes they attack without knowing why they attack, because they are in a crisis. In this case, you can't say you respond according to what the person wants, because you don't know. Even the person doesn't know what he wants.

TR: It seems that often you have some knowledge of the person as the person is, in any case, unless it's somebody you just met that very moment on the street. If the person is a friend, then there will be some idea of that person's state of mind—not necessarily just that person as insane, but his aspects of sanity as well and his particular way of handling himself in terms of sanity.

S: No, but this is a case where my friend has to go to the hospital. She's completely out of herself—she can awake in the middle of the night and do anything, and if she doesn't go to the hospital she might kill herself.

TR: Quite unlikely.

S: How can you deal with that?

TR: You can deal with the given situation. If you are her friend, then you must have some understanding of her—not necessarily from the technical point of view of a psychiatrist, but in terms of being able to deal with her particular aspects and go along with them. You *can* deal with it, of course. It is exactly an aspect of the normality of the person—so you go along with *that.*

S: But then sometimes you have to use violence.

TR: Sure, you can. That also depends on the situation. I don't mean to say that you have to be completely gentle all the time—that's another weak point, trying to be too kind. In fact, a person needs reminders, shaking back—violence, in this case. So violence can be a reminder of sanity—presuming, of course, that you who are going to work with her are yourself sane. One has to use a sane kind of violence, not insane violence.

Student: What happens if you're the one who's really feeling crazy, if you're the person who feels out of control?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You don't purely have to live in your dream world, dealing with your imagination and your neurosis by yourself. You have something else to relate with—the actual physical world outside. And if you are going too far, your physical world will act as a reminder to you. That's a very important point: the only way to deal with yourself is through your relationship with the actual physical world outside. Therefore, the body is very important in this case, in human life.

S: Sometimes you begin seeing things in the physical world that aren't there, hallucinations.

TR: That means that you are not seeing the physical world as it is, completely. One should take a second look.

Student: What is openness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Openness is without paranoia, I suppose, to begin with. You don't have to put up barriers or a boundary to your territory:

in your territory, others are welcome as well. That doesn't mean that a person has to be absolutely polite, diplomatic, just acting. It is a genuine welcoming. Your territory is not defended territory but it's open territory—anyone can walk into it. By doing that, automatically the other person will be able to walk into it without putting out any territory of his own.

Student: Is bardo experience possible in the awakened state?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In the awakened state there will be the experience of the essence of the bardo, which is the constant act of compassion. A continual loosening process, either in terms of the other person or yourself, is taking place all the time.

Student: Could you speak further on the difference between surrender to the guru and a life insurance policy?

Trungpa Rinpoche: An insurance policy automatically talks of what could go wrong and how you can guard against it. An insurance policy often talks about being a guardian, in other words, sort of exorcising the danger. In the case of surrendering to the guru, the emphasis is not so much on the danger aspect, but that the danger could be transmuted into creative relationships. Everything that comes up in the pattern is a continual creative process. Both negative and positive could be used as stepping-stones on the path, which the guru could point out to you as long as you don't try to hide from the guru. That's the ultimate meaning of surrendering, surrendering all aspects of yourself to the guru. And then you learn from that.

Student: It seems to me that there is a boundary between the generosity of openness and self-defense. Sometimes you can't be generous without harming either yourself or both yourself and the other person.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, the general idea is that if you open yourself to what the given situation is, then you see its completely naked quality. You don't have to put up a defensive mechanism anymore, because you see through it and you know exactly what to do. You just deal with things, rather than defending yourself.

S: But then the feeling might be that you have to refuse somebody.

TR: Sure, yes. Openness doesn't necessarily mean that you have to make yourself available to the other person all the time. Openness is

knowing the situation—if it's healthy and helpful to the other person to involve yourself with them, or if it is more healthy not to involve yourself, if showing this kind of commitment is not healthy for the other person. It works both ways. Openness doesn't mean you have to take everything in at all; you have a right to reject or accept—but when you reject you don't close *yourself*, you reject the situation.

S: But maybe the other person doesn't want to reject the situation.

TR: Whether you accept or reject it depends on whether it's a healthy situation for the other person or not; it's not purely what they want. Openness doesn't mean that you are doing purely what the other person wants. Their wantingness may not be particularly accurate. They may have all sorts of ulterior motives and neurotic aspects to their desire, and often it's not recommended to encourage that. So you just work along with what's valuable there.

FIVE

The Bardo of Illusory Body

WE HAVE BEEN TALKING about bardo at a very personal, as well as a more general, experiential level. The third bardo, the illusory body bardo, is extremely experiential and particularly personal. The illusory body bardo, or body of illusion, starts from the river of passion and desire of the human realm. Such passion is very intimate. Everything is experienced purely at the naked flesh level—as though our clothing, masks, and skin had been peeled off. And this very personal, sensitive, and touchy aspect continues with our state of being all the time. We react to situations emotionally, and these emotions are so sharp and penetrating that we can't bear to see them.

It is very sharp. But at the same time, because of that experience of sharpness and because the intimacy of desire and emotions is so intense; automatically, of course, we put on the natural device of masks, skin, and clothing. That is the problem. The minute we begin to put on masks or clothing, we have second thoughts. After all, we *do* like to experience these passions and emotions in their naked quality—but at the same time, it seems to be more manageable, pleasurable, to put some masks or clothing over them. There's that kind of ambiguity. In other words, we are not quite certain where we are at. On the one hand, we want to indulge, to dive into this experience completely. On the other hand, it is too embarrassing, even to ourselves, to do that. Having some kind of mask is good, from that point of view. That kind of uncertainty is an ongoing problem in life.

In talking about the human realm, in connection with the bardo of

illusory body, a lot of problems and conflicts come from preconceptions and expectations. We have expectations of achievement, expectations of fulfillment. We remember that driving force, the energetic and speedy experience of the world of the asuras, the jealous gods. There's the nostalgic quality of wishing to go back to that level, where everything happened so efficiently. But in the case of the human realm, nothing happens very efficiently. We would like to imagine something before we get into it, and then we would like to create situations out of our imagination. We push that imaginary home, that imaginary convenience or luxury. We try to re-create them, to produce them physically as actual situations of now. The problem is that we are not able to achieve that, which brings us frustration.

Another factor involved with the human realm is choice. Choice is based on irritation. Without irritation there wouldn't be any choice but a choice between one particular category and another. In the human realm, for instance, there is a choice between the personal experience of analyzing oneself, or intellectualizing oneself, and the personal experience of instinct. Depending on a person's situation, one will automatically tend to pick one of those two. We may feel uncertain unless there's an explanation or analysis. Or else, in a situation based on instinct, analyzing it causes the experience to become uninspiring. Analysis doesn't allow any room for inspiration; one would like to have a pure state of passion.

These seem to be problems that run right through the human realm, that we all face. But then how do we work with them? How do we see a glimpse of transcending them in terms of bardo experience? When we talk of illusory body, it is obviously illusory, not the physical tangible body. It is a mind/body situation always. This illusory body is based on a very healthy attitude: these confusions and polarities are being worked with at a realistic level in which we are willing to face the illusory aspect, the mirage quality, that hallucinatory quality.

So the human realm and its bardo experience has a hallucinatory quality, or illusory body. This illusory body is precisely the transparent nature of experiences: that we see, yet we don't see. We see something, yet at the same time we are not quite certain whether we are seeing the background or the scenery itself. Uncertain hallucination, ultimate hallucination. And that ultimate hallucination acts as a bardo experience.

It is the choice between real and unreal—is this illusory body illusion itself, or is it pure imagination? One begins to question whether the illusion or mirage exists or not. And a person again begins to be involved with this threshold between the transparency of the figure and the solidity of its background. One begins to have a very confused attitude about this. It is exactly the same thing as we were talking about yesterday and the day before—the uncertainty as to truth and falsity. You are not quite certain whether you are actually getting somewhere or whether you are being fooled by something.

That uncertainty always happens, of course. We could use the analogy of our being here together: we are not quite certain why we are here; we are not quite certain why I am talking or why others are listening—but at the same time, it happens that way. It may have happened in the magical sense or the accidental sense, but it did happen, we can't deny that. It is quite certain, as far as we are concerned, that we are not going to wake up and find ourselves in our parents' house with breakfast ready for us—that's not going to happen. We are here. You may not know why you are here, what the hell you are doing practicing Buddhist meditation and listening to a Tibetan freak. But it is happening nevertheless.

That peak point of not being certain why, but things just happening, is the bardo experience of the human realm. Again, it carries the same sense of possibilities: I'm not quite certain why I am here, but if I pass that level of uncertainty, maybe after all there is something—or maybe after all there isn't something. It is the very threshold of not knowing who's fooling whom—but at the same time, something is fooling something. That foolishness is the illusory quality, of course, not knowing. There's nothing tangible at all. It is completely loose, irritatingly loose. I mean, it is worth getting aggressive about it. It is like trying to pin up a poster, to paste it on the wall—but somehow the wall doesn't exist and the poster doesn't exist. It shifts all the time; you can't fix it.

Realize this foolishness of who's fooling whom, which is the illusory body, the bardo experience of the human realm. It is desire which drove us into this particular experience, and which is the background of the human realm. In other words, we find ourselves here because the river of human consciousness, human passion, drove us here. And so we find ourselves here. But at the same time, having found ourselves here and

then not knowing what we are doing is the peak experience of the bardo of illusory body, which is very important to realize.

The illusory body is made out of both yes and no; it is both negative and positive. You are not quite certain where it is, how it is—it is ambiguous, uncertain. At the same time, there is a general feeling or perception of the transparent quality of the body or, you could say, realizing the foolishness of us. It is like the analogy of us being here together and fooling each other: that uncertainty or vagueness, not knowing exactly whether you are going or coming, is the illusory aspect. But I wouldn't say this is confusion in the pejorative sense. It is seeing the abstract quality of nature as it is—maya, the dance of illusion.

The actual practice in everyday life is just to acknowledge that transparent uncertain quality as it is. There's no point in trying to stay back or run away from it—in fact you can't; you are in it. And you can't force its development either; it has its own pattern. The only way to work or deal with this bardo experience of the human realm is just to proceed along. Depending on your previous training and meditation experience—or your training in aggression and passion—you just go along. It's the karmic pattern: you got onto this particular train, and the train is going to go on and on and on. There's no point in panicking. You just have to accept it and face it and go along with it. All the bardo concepts that have evolved have that unchangeable quality, that natural powerful quality. Once you are in that state, you can't change it. The only way you can deal with it is to see its background quality.

Student: I've heard you use the term *mind/body* before, and I'm still struggling to grasp this. Is it comparable to the concept of shunyata?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In a sense it is comparable to the idea of shunyata, but the whole idea of mind/body is that every perception has its solidity as well as its loose quality. In other words, you can't fight it or destroy it, and you can't embrace it or cuddle it. It's a loose pattern of perception. Our version of body.

Student: What do you mean by background quality or background?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that once you have gotten into something, the idea of undoing it is very much based on the idea of panic. So the idea is just to accept, ultimate acceptance of the whole situation. At the same time, asking questions doesn't help. The possibility is that once you

begin to ask questions—"Why is this so?," for example, or "Why are we here?"—we are just here and questioning doesn't clarify it at all. In fact, it confuses you more, unless you are actually willing to accept that you are treading on this particular area, you are eating this food, you are sleeping under this particular roof—it is so. It's the unchangeable quality of situations.

There is the possibility that people might think: "I'm not going to accept it; I'm going to change it." But there again, you are involved with another experience—you are *in* here, and you can only change *from* here to something else. So you're still governed by the situation where you are, and your changing can only take place by relating with that place and accepting it. It's a question of seeing the whole background as it is and accepting it.

In other words, in human life, if you feel that you have made a mistake, you don't try to undo the past or the present, but you just accept where you are at and work from there. Tremendous openness as to where you are is necessary. This applies to the practice of meditation, for instance. A person should learn to meditate on the spot, in the given moment, rather than thinking, "I'm going to give up my job. When I reach pension age, I'm going to retire and receive a pension, and I'm going to build my house in Hawaii or the middle of India, or maybe the Gobi Desert, and *then* I'm going to enjoy myself. I'll live a life of solitude and then I'll really meditate." Things never happen that way.

Student: Is physical pain an instance of this particular bardo?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Using the analogy of mind/body, usually physical pain is translated by the mind; mental pain has been translated into physical pain. So often there's not really such a thing as actual physical pain per se; it's mind pain, mental pain.

Student: If somebody is meditating and having a lot of confused distorted thoughts, would you consider it good meditation to regard everything as really not there, solid but kind of floaty?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, if you are clinging or trying to solidify thoughts, then the basic idea of meditation is lost completely, because you fail to see the illusory quality of thoughts. But you see, fundamentally, in terms of meditation, such ideas as good meditation and bad meditation are a child's game. They don't exist. Meditation is just so.

Once you try to put it into categories then you are already lost. Meditation becomes a giant thought process in itself. But if a person is able to open completely to the situation of meditation, then anything which happens within that realm is usually transparent or translucent anyway.

Student: If you feel close to a bardo experience, then there's really nothing you can do except try not to clothe it or put projections on it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Just go along and don't panic. Just go along.

Student: When you're in the awakened state of mind and there's no identification of the ego with the mind, is the mind still there? Do thoughts come? Are the mind processes still there?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That depends on the level of confidence in yourself. At the beginning, mind is very much there. Meditation is a mental game to start with, but at a certain stage you begin to accept and you begin to relax more and go along with the pattern of practice. Then there is less mind and more space. (I am talking in terms of the grasping quality of mind, in this case, rather than consciousness or intelligence.)

S: So the proper attitude to meditation is that you just sit down and there you are, and everything sort of goes through?

TR: Exactly, yes. Just sitting there. Absolutely doing nothing.

Student: If the mind is as important as the body—if you are here and your mind is in New York, for instance—then how can you be sure where you are?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In exactly the same way that you are here, because your attitude to things is still here. Whether the temperature is hot or cold, your mind attitude of being here still continues. But the imaginary quality of memories goes along as well.

S: But at a given moment you can be somewhere else.

TR: You could be, yes, but you are still here as well. You see, mind has such an expansive range: all kinds of memories, including childhood memories or memories of several thousands of years ago, as well as presently being here.

Student: Are you not tending to solidify our thoughts by answering our questions?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes. We have to speak the language of

confusion—that is what has been happening. But once you begin to go along with it, then it is possible that the language of confusion, the language of samsara, begins to be seen as absolute truth.

S: Then we wouldn't be here?

TR: Then you wouldn't be here. Our method is very primitive; that's the only way, it seems.

Student: Are we living in a bardo state now, and if we are, is this part of the illusory mind that you're talking about?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Definitely.

S: Where does the awakened state of mind relate to this?

TR: Within illusion. If we are able to understand the illusory quality as it is, then that is a glimpse of the awake state as well, at the same time. In other words, we are operating on the illusory body level along with some seed of wakefulness, otherwise we wouldn't be discussing the subject at all. The intelligence to talk about this subject, work on this subject, meditate with it, is the awakened state of mind.

Student: How do you put together the illusory state and the structure of Buddhist thought—which lays all sorts of trips, on me anyway, about higher states and goals and the aim of relieving all suffering and so forth. It seems to me that there is a rigidity, or something concrete there. Yet all the practices that lead you there are so illusory, as you say. How could I come to terms with what I consider to be a complete dichotomy?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose the only way to relate with that, or to understand it, is purely by not trying to categorize it. That's where the acceptance comes from. The methods or techniques put out are dualistic ones, illusory ones; but at the same time, the inspiration for these techniques is the inspiration of awake. So the way to work with it is not to put things into pigeonholes anymore at all—a noncaring quality as to whether it's illusion or not.

S: They coexist, then.

TR: That is so, yes. But we are not trying to put them into categories.

Student: Is this like saying that when you meditate, after a while the thoughts are still there, that they'll always be there?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Exactly, yes.

S: But they won't be there?

TR: Exactly, yes. That's a good one.

Student: Rinpoche, the buddhas are often called "conquerors," or *jina*. What is it that they conquer?

Trungpa Rinpoche: They conquer the limitless range of self-deceptions. It has been said that they destroy the seven great mountains of conceptualization. This comes up in the Madhyamaka philosophy of Nagarjuna. In a dialogue called *Vajra Spark*, the vajra spark destroys nine gigantic mountain ranges, which are a succession of mountain ranges one after another, each protecting the previous mountains—it's the succession of self-deceptions.

Student: During meditation, if at one point you're seeing the solidity of thought and at another point you see the space in between them and the looseness, and you're not doing anything, isn't there still that witnessing quality?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There is that witnessing quality, yes.

S: Should one try not to be a witness?

TR: You don't try to do anything; you just accept and go along with it. That's the whole point, you see. Then, at a certain stage, you begin to realize that any techniques or frameworks that you put things into are also foolish things. So you drop them. But until you actually see that foolish quality, you just go along with being a fool.

Student: With the bardo of illusory body, for the first time I get a sense of its being pejorative—with the other two bardos I didn't get that sense. Why is that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, the whole point is that we are trying to speak the language of samsara. In speaking of the inspiration opposite to all these bardo experiences, we are speaking purely in terms of duality. Therefore it is not an absolute answer in any case. In this sense, even mentioning freedom at all, teaching at all, dharma at all, is a pejorative thing, fundamentally. It is not an absolute thing, because we are talking about it. We are panicking in some sense by talking of the teachings.

Student: What is the difference between samsara and bardo?

Trungpa Rinpoche: They seem to be the same. *Samsara* is a general term which means a sort of whirlpool, a continual circle of confusion. One confusion sows the seed of another confusion, so you go round and round and round. Bardo is the same kind of experience. But at the same

time, there is the possibility of stepping out of the confusion of samsara, as well as getting some understanding of the bardo experience and transcending it. It is the same thing. Bardo experience could continue all the time: these peak experiences of illusory body, jealously, and the eternity of the god realm could continue to come up. Then you go back to the confused level—and you repeat that again *and* again.

Student: It seems to me that as long as all these things are happening, there's a need for meditation.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. Bardo experience is very important to know about. For one thing, nothing is regarded as some unexpected revelation coming up. A general tendency in meditation is that people come to these particular highlights of experience; and not knowing about these highlights of experience, they regard them as revelation. Having understood bardo experience, or *knowing* bardo experience, removes this trip of a sudden glimpse of enlightenment, which causes a lot of people to tend to freak out. They have a satori experience, and since then their life has been changed. And they try to hold on to it—which is the most dangerous, lethal aspect of all. Having understood bardo experience, then such a sudden glimpse could be associated with a particular state of mind, whether you belong to the hell realm or hungry ghost realm, whatever it may be. So nothing is regarded as extraordinary; it's just one of the patterns.

Student: Is bardo a breakthrough?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes and no. It depends. Bardo experience could be a breakthrough, but at the same time it is not a big deal. It is not ultimate freedom, necessarily. There's something funny about people saying that their lives have been completely changed; for instance, that since the first time they took acid or had some kind of experience, their lives have been completely transformed and changed. That brings up the idea that they want to discontinue what they are. They don't like what they were, but they like what they are now. Bardo understanding brings them into the very earth-grounding quality that nothing is changed before bardo experience, and nothing is changed after bardo experience—the experience is simply gone through. That is a very important point. Bardo experiences are not transformations of your life; they are continuity. And that conti-

nuity takes the shape both of highlights and of ordinary situations as well.

S: Bardo could be a very impressive peak experience or it could also be just a regular little wave?

TR: Yes. But either way, nothing is regarded as a complete change. That is very important. The continuity of the process of what you are cannot be escaped. You can't regard achieving something as abandoning your bad self and latching on to the good one.

Student: Is the level of intensity at all relevant?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you are involved with confusion or with hope and fear more intensively, then that kind of bardo experience comes up; whereas if you are involved with the practice of awake, with meditation practice and other attempts to see reality or the awakened state of mind—then that kind of peak experience develops with the same intensity. So bardo is just a building-up of energy—it could be either negative energy or positive energy. The intensity is the same. It really depends on how involved you are with your pattern of life before you have the experience of bardo.

S: So intensity is not really relevant?

TR: No, intensity is not relevant.

Student: You mentioned the word *freedom* several times. Would you define it for us?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Freedom is the possibility of being generous. You can afford to open yourself and walk on the path easily—without defending yourself or watching yourself or being self-conscious all the time. It is the absence of ego, the absence of self-consciousness. That is ultimate freedom. The absence of self-consciousness brings generosity. You don't have to watch for dangers or be careful that you are going too far or too slow. It is the confidence which is freedom, rather than breaking free from chains of imprisonment, exactly. Developing confidence and breaking out of psychological, internal imprisonment brings freedom naturally. In other words, it is generosity.

S: You would have to have both self-discipline and detachment in order for that freedom not to turn into simple self-indulgence. Is that not true?

TR: If you begin to indulge in self, then you also have to keep that

self-indulgence safe, which automatically becomes self-conscious—it ceases to be freedom, anyway.

Student: You've spoken several times about space. I remember your saying that people wanted to fill up space with material objects, filling rooms with chairs and things. I was wondering if you also fill up empty space with thoughts—say, conversation? I'm sort of afraid of empty space, and I notice that when I'm in empty space I begin to talk.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, space is everywhere, isn't it? If you have any kind of activity going on, that activity must have some space in order to move about. So space is anywhere, everywhere, all the time. That space, or openness for that matter, is the room in which creative process could develop. For creative process to be possible, you have to have space. For instance, you can't grow a plant without room—the more room you have, that much more could the plant develop.

Student: Rinpoche, in meditation, if one is plunged into colors and diagrams and images—not thinking, but just in it—would that be hallucination, illusion, or reality?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What do you think?

S: I was just there. I don't know. There weren't any thoughts.

TR: I would say, it is the reality of illusion.

S: Where does hallucination come into it, then?

TR: That *is* hallucination. But there's nothing wrong with that. It is so. It is hallucination and it is real and it is vision—as far as it goes. I mean, that much we could look into. There's no really fixed, ultimate, 100 percent or 200 percent answer to reality. Reality depends on each situation.

S: Where does that fit into the bardo experience?

TR: Well, there *is* a possibility of building peak experience in meditation practice. If you begin to see some particular big experience or breakthrough, that is bardo experience. But bardo experience does not necessarily take place in meditation only. It takes place in everyday life as well, when you think you have a big breakthrough. For instance, if you have a big argument with somebody, which could be regarded as your peak experience, there will be the element of bardo in it. It could be called a bardo experience. So bardo experience doesn't have to be only a meditation experience; it could happen in everyday life.

SIX

The Bardo of Dreams

THE ANIMAL REALM, or the confusion of being utterly involved with self-consciousness, seems to be the next destination. There's a certain point that we should be clear about—the very word *confusion.* Usually when we talk of confusion, it is just simply not being able to make up your mind, such as whether you should belong to that or to this. But in the case of fundamental confusion, you are proud of your confusion. You feel you have something to hold on to, and you do not want to give in or to yield. You are extremely proud of your confusion, extremely self-righteous about it, and you would even fight for it. You could present the validity of your confusion, and you could also present your pride in that confusion as a valid thing, an absolute thing.

This type of confusion happens on a larger scale a great deal, as well. In particular, if there is a notion of validating confusion, that means there is also a tendency to overpower others. So power over others is one of the other factors involved in the animal realm. You are aggressively sure of what you are, and because of that you would like to influence other people and draw them into your empire, your territory. That is the meaning of power over others. Such power could happen politically or spiritually. It could happen spiritually in the romantic idea of the guru, or teacher, as a powerful person who can act on that power, who can relate to people and overpower them. Politically, it is that as a leader, you have fixed patterns of ideas as to what the society or the social pattern should be, and you put forth your ideas and your doctrines. Fundamentally, this approach is more a matter of confusion than of pride or

egohood. It is confusion because one is not quite certain what one is; but the very fact of that uncertainty provides an extra boost to push forward. The basic twist of ego is that such uncertainty doesn't become humble, but instead becomes proud. If you don't see the situation as it is—it doesn't matter whether you know what to do or not—you just push through and present a show of force. And accidentally something happens—something clicks. Then you take over.

That tendency to overpower through confusion is the dominant characteristic of the animal realm. It is like attacking a tiger. The more you attack a tiger, that much more does the tiger become egocentric and aggressive, because the tiger is not quite certain whether you are going to kill him or he is going to kill you. He's not quite certain, but he's taking advantage of that confusion, that ignorance. There is no reason a wounded tiger would be more aggressive than an ordinary tiger, a fresh young tiger; or, for that matter, there is no reason old tigers would become more aggressive than young ones. They may know that they don't have sharp teeth or sharp claws anymore and that this act of aggression could become suicidal—but they still do it. That kind of crying and laughing at the same time, that pride, is the confusion of the animal realm. You are not quite certain whether a particular person is crying because of his or her humiliation, or whether this person is laughing because of his or her sinister opportunities.

That mixture of crying and laughing is confusion's quality—absolutely the whole thing is confused. And that confusion seems to be the peak experience of bardo in the animal realm—the dream bardo. A lot of people may expect that in the dream bardo we might discuss how to play games with our dreams—how to levitate and do astral traveling, visit our friends, visit unknown worlds, survey all this unknown territory. But if you look at the dream world as it is, there's no room for astral travel. It is the hard truth, the obvious truth, that dreaming—although very creative—is based on the uncertainty between day experience and night experience. You actually are not quite certain whether you are sleeping or not. As soon as you realize that you are asleep, that you are dreaming and having a terrifying dream experience—it immediately dissipates and you begin to awake. The nightmare begins to wake you up.

The dream bardo is the confusion of not knowing what you are—whether you are a gentle person or an aggressive person. You are not

making an absolute reconciliation, but you are just trying to do something. Dreams very much reflect the day experience into the sleep experience. Metaphorically, we could talk of dreams not only as sleep experiences alone, but in terms of the dreamlike quality of the daylight experience, in which we are uncertain what is real and what is unreal. In other words, the dream bardo is a way of seeing yourself in that particular uncertainty. Whether you are absolutely weak or absolutely powerful, absolutely aggressive or absolutely peaceful—between those experiences there is a dreamlike quality, a hallucinatory quality. I wouldn't say exactly hallucinatory, but there is a quality of ultimate confusion, absolute vagueness. I'm sure a lot of us have experienced that. In a drug experience, for instance, you are not quite certain whether you are completely able to see the subtleties of things as they are—there is a sharpness to the color and the overall experience, but on the other hand, it has an imaginary and confused quality as well. You are not quite certain whether you are going crazy or whether you are actually seeing something. That kind of ambiguity is also a particular source of dream bardo.

Dream bardo also has to do with the confusion involved in making decisions. Often, a lot of us try to make decisions: "Should I be doing that or should I be doing this? Should I commit myself into this or shouldn't I commit myself into this?" There is uncertainty, ambiguity, confusion. That confusion of making a decision between two options involves a certain living experience of the two polarities: "Should I give up my job or should I stick to my job? If I give up my job, I will be good and free and I will no longer be bound to that particular commitment. On the other hand, if I give up my job, then I won't have any source of insurance. I'll be purely living a life of chance, trying to find some means of survival." For that matter, there are all sorts of decisions. "Should I involve myself with this particular religious organization and attain enlightenment, or should I slow myself down and just try to relive what I've been trying to do in the past?" All sorts of decisions come up, and those kinds of decisions come up because of confusion—obviously. Fundamentally, confusion is based on not knowing the actual situation, not being able to see the meeting point of the two—"Should I or shouldn't I?" I wouldn't exactly say the answer lies between them, but the actual experience lies between them. Experience lies between "should" and "shouldn't."

That no-man's-land quality of bardo is the answer, in some ways; it is the way of breaking through. Further on, once you are able to see that particular precision of the in-between experience, that no-man's-land experience, you may begin to see that "you should" and "you shouldn't" have been childish. You can either do that or do this, but there is no *permanent* experience, no permanent security, involved. You begin to see that some kind of basic core of continuity is taking place, rather than trying to change from one black to another white. So confusion and tension, in this case, are extremely useful and helpful. Without that, there would be no pattern of seeing the situation, or learning process, at all. In other words, confusion and uncertainty are like the letters or initials for each step that you have to go through. That is the bardo experience of the dream world. That dream bardo that you go through, you walk through, is an extremely important and very personal experience.

Student: If you make a decision, it is going to bring you tension because you don't know how it is going to work out, whether it's going to be good or bad. Do you just go along and continue to accept it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, ultimately decisions don't come out in terms of yes and no, black and white. The ultimate answer, so to speak, would say you're right but at the same time you are wrong.

S: So that brings up the tension?

TR: That *releases* tension, the ultimate tension. If you are involved with something, and if you reject or accept it absolutely, one hundred percent, then the tension is going to remain all the time. There is no way of solving the problem of tension by making black-and-white decisions, in other words. The only way of transcending that tension is through the acceptance of all aspects.

S: That's in the future someplace. Immediately, you can't have this lack of tension—you have to wait for the situation to clear itself.

TR: Exactly, yes. Nothing is going to be a magical sedative. But strangely enough, once you begin to accept that, then half of the problem has been solved.

Student: You seem to stress that the tension coming out of indecision is more detrimental than the disaster which may arise from making the wrong decision. For instance, in your book *Born in Tibet,* you had to decide which of three passes to go through.[5] I would have been in abso-

lute stitches, because there would really be no way to judge. Then you made the decision as to which way to go, and you did the right thing. In that moment, do you also accept that it may *not* be the right thing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That sounds good. Yes, exactly. I suppose you could boil all this down to saying that as long as there is no expectation of magic, then everything is in its proper order. I wouldn't say everything is perfect; I would say everything is in its absolute order. You see, once you begin to ward off something, thinking that you are going to be the perfect decision maker, then, like a lot of politicians we know, it works in the opposite way, because you are exposing yourself to criticism, to negative, unhealthy situations, and to chaos.

S: How about in relation to meditation, where you said you accept the possibility that you won't get anywhere at all—or you might, who knows; I don't know. It seems like I've sat and sat and sat and all I have gotten is a sore ass.

TR: Yes? That is the essence of what we have been talking about all the time, in fact. It seems that you might go crazy or you might attain something.

S: I don't worry about going crazy. It just seems dull. A lot of people sit around in these discussion groups and everybody says, "Oh, I had this great experience. I met this lama and all of a sudden I was . . . it took me three weeks to get back down to earth." But I just see people and they say hello and I say hello. And I ask you a question and you say, "Mm-hmm."

TR: You see, the point is that you can't have a 100 percent absolute waiting period at all. Whenever there is any kind of process going on, there are always ups and downs—little flickers of doubts and little flickers of understanding. This goes on and on and on. Maybe we don't need dramatic flashes of bardo experience, but detailed bardo experiences are equally good. And these little details, which we generally ignore, or little problems that come up, are the only way. It could start from the absolutely insignificant level—the very fact of your relationship to your ass is in itself very interesting.

Student: Rinpoche, what is the root meaning of these three words: *magic, miraculous,* and *miracle*?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I suppose you could look that up in a dictionary.

S: No, not from the dictionary.

TR: The Oxford dictionary? It's generally pretty clever in giving definitions. But I think the fundamental idea of miracle, or magic, is having something that you don't believe in, in order to prove your belief. That is, your belief is challenged by its opposite. If you expect the world to be this way, downside up, and if you suddenly see it upside down, that's a miracle. There are numerous acts of magic and miracles that we have heard of and that we know about, such as water changing into fire and all sorts of little details like that. But somehow they also bring a kind of faith or trust which is based purely on mystery. You don't bother to understand anything, but you are willing to submit to that mystery. For instance, you are not interested in studying how an aircraft works mechanically, but you are still willing to fly. It is that kind of laziness: such-and-such a thing works, but I just want to get service; I don't want to go into the details of how it works. That seems to be the most damaging attitude of all: that we expect things to work purely because we want them to, rather than because they are.

Fundamental miracles usually only occur at the situational level. For instance, there is the miracle of our being here together. Such an incident takes place that I came all the way from Tibet, and generally every individual here has their own story about how they happen by accident to be here. That type of miracle works continuously, all the time. It happens. You can't change it. You can't divert the pattern of that miracle into another one, because the miracle has already happened.

Student: You said that the acceptance of the situation solved half of the problem of making a decision. I wonder if the other half—actually having to go ahead and decide—grows out of the acceptance.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, the acceptance is faith and gentleness; therefore, it could be said to be compassion. Once you see the situation as it is, then you just involve yourself in it and it takes you along. In fact, you can tell what the end is going to be. That is developing egoless common sense. Egoless common sense is not based on "because-of-anything," but it is based on "it-will-be-so." You could project your future quite accurately or take the right path quite accurately if you had that general egoless common sense. With such precision and clarity, as well as egolessness, you are not dwelling on hope or fear. Then things take place naturally.

S: Can things take place completely passively in that way? I read a passage in the scriptures comparing wisdom and skillful means, and it said that to abide in wisdom without skillful means would be a one-sided nirvana at best. I want to know if there's an active side to the picture.

TR: Of course, the physical situation of committing yourself and taking actual symbolic gestures, so to speak, is itself an earth-grounding quality.

S: Can that active side be described? Is it moving like a cow? Is it leaping? Is it being like a warrior?

TR: Yes, definitely. It is a warrior type of experience. I mean chance, of course, all the time taking chances. You have to be brave.

S: Does a warrior go back and forth? Does he or she sometimes just sit and watch? That image of warrior doesn't seem to go along with the attitude of passive acceptance necessary for seeing situations.

TR: Acceptance doesn't mean not committing yourself, just dwelling on the idea of such-and-such. It is accepting and then putting yourself into that situation of acceptance. That also allows space. You don't rush into something completely because you had a flash—you take a portion and then you eat it and digest it and then you eat the next portion.

Student: What should one's attitude be toward possible mistakes?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's no good trying to look at it philosophically and trying to comfort yourself. But it is apparent that mistakes also have a point to them. As far as the warrior's steps go, there is no defeat at all, there are no mistakes at all. Both positive and negative are the path, the general pattern. Any negative experience which occurs is an invitation or vanguard of positive experiences, as well. It just happens that way.

Student: In any experience, how much of that experience would you say we have control over in terms of will? Give me, if you can, a percentage there.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a rather dangerous point. When we talk about will, it is purely based on ego's terms of benefit, or whether ego is willing to leap out and sacrifice itself. But there is some kind of faith, rather than will, which is seeing things as they are. Then you are not afraid of acting. It is an intuitive way of living and relating with situations. That kind of faith or determination, in fact, dominates the whole

process. It's the most important point of all. It is the fuel to drive yourself.

Student: What does being brave mean?
Trungpa Rinpoche: Not looking back.

Student: How can you tell when you're just being greedy? You may be pushing and you don't want to give up because you think you are attaining something. But you are being greedy and you're going too fast. At the same time, you are afraid you may be going crazy—so you try to knock yourself down. You may drink some alcohol or something like that. So you alternate between being greedy and pushing on and being afraid and trying to turn off.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Turning off seems to be dangerous. If you are driving a hundred and six miles an hour on the highway and suddenly you realize you are going too fast—if you turn off your car, that's a cop-out.

Student: I like to think not in terms of decision but in terms of direction. Is there such a thing as recognizing a direction? For example, that you are here and that we are here is a direction—we happen to be converging at one point. Is there such a thing as recognizing your own direction?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Of course you have to have a close relationship with the direction. In this case, when we talk about direction it is just the direction itself, without being self-conscious about it. Once you are able to realize that particular direction, the path is the goal and the goal is the path—and travel is also the path, as well as the traveler. All things are one. Once you are able to see that, to have that kind of relationship, then it happens as a natural process.

Student: The way you use the word *warrior*, the way Don Juan uses the word *warrior*, and the way we've been relating to warriors altogether, is in terms of fighting. For instance, saying that "a warrior is brave" means not to look back, and to step out toward those things which are coming to meet you, also has a sense of fighting—as opposed to the more passive way of being open to see. Don Juan seems to say that to be a warrior is a lesser way than the way of the seer, because the man who sees puts things in relationship to seeing.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, that seems to be absolutely fitting. The warrior is a practitioner like the bodhisattvas; the seer is a man of wisdom like the buddhas, who see the situation as it is but don't have to enter into manipulative actions of any kind at all. In the case of the warrior, there's still duality. Even though it may not be the duality of awareness of oneself as ego, there is still the duality of action and the object of action. That's where bravery comes in—not to hesitate because you see action as it is; not to interpret in terms of concepts, but try to work with action itself and go along and along. But somehow that doesn't mean struggle. Absolute warriors, ideal warriors, don't struggle. They just proceed along because they know their work, they know their abilities. They don't question it. Their actual inspiration comes from the situation as it is. If the situation becomes more and more overwhelming and powerful, that much more energy goes along with it. It's like judo: you use the situation as your power rather than trying to fight with it.

Student: A lot of times I think, "Well, why do it?" A situation comes up and I'm inspired to act, but then I get a flash that says, "Well, what if I leave it alone, don't do it?"

Trungpa Rinpoche: The point is that the situation is there anyway and you do something. That's a natural process. You don't do anything *for* something. That would be like questioning the nature of fire as burning and the nature of water as wet. But you do it because of the situation. You don't have to do something *for* anything at all; you just happen to do it. It's a natural process, an absolutely spontaneous process. That's the difference between the ordinary puritanical practice of discipline as opposed to the bodhisattva's practice of discipline. The bodhisattva is working along with situations as things happen. You don't force things or work because you want to achieve something. It is like the natural growth of plants. If there's enough rain and sunshine, the plants will grow; if there isn't enough rain or sunshine, the plants won't grow. It's as natural a process as that.

S: But why do it? A plant can't turn away from the sun, but it seems as if some part of me can turn away from an action.

TR: It would be like telling a plant to go from one area to another area and reestablish itself because it's a better situation. This wouldn't happen to a plant.

S: We really have no choice in this—the situation takes over.

TR: I wouldn't say the situation takes you over, but you are working with the situation. And in this case, if you are completely open and completely one with it, then having a choice or not having a choice is irrelevant. It doesn't apply anymore.

S: You don't make a choice?

TR: I would say you don't don't make a choice, or you do make a choice.

S: Why not just make random choices in that case, and then live with whatever random choice you make?

TR: Why choice at all, if it happens to be random? I mean, why choice anyway?

S: Well, we always think we have a choice, but we very often don't realize that we don't.

TR: That's what we *think*, but we haven't actually experienced it. We haven't seen the other side of the coin at all.

Student: If you're meditating and it's becoming very painful and very hard to continue, would being a warrior mean keeping on with a course of action that's very difficult and painful?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, you don't evaluate the situation. You don't regard a situation as good or bad, but you just go along with the situation. So endurance doesn't come into the picture. When we talk about endurance, it is related with our physical sensibilities, our individual feedback—"If I hit somebody, would my fist hurt?"—that kind of relationship. But in this case, it doesn't happen in that way.

Student: If you are experiencing extreme tension, frustration, and difficulty, would that be a clue that you're on the wrong path? Would you consequently change it, or should you persist in what you are doing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You could continue what you are doing and you wouldn't ask questions. But that doesn't mean you have to be completely instinctive, like an animal. That's another idea, which could be misleading.

S: That brings will back in again. There is a force in us that we define as will.

TR: There is, there is. You're *willing* to let yourself be in that situation intelligently. You expose yourself to that situation and that situation then

plays back. It happens, so it is both wisdom and compassion, wisdom and action, all together.

S: So *will* becomes *willingness*?

TR: The generosity of openness, yes.

Student: When you're a warrior, don't you tend to forget that other people are warriors too? Isn't there a danger of getting lost in your own actions and feeling superior?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think these complications would occur if you were a complete warrior. A warrior doesn't just mean being blunt, but being wise or intelligent as well. You would appreciate others. Because you've opened yourself completely and you have the intelligence and precision of seeing the situation as it is, if another warrior comes along the path, you would acknowledge them—as well as enemies who come along the path, possibly very devious enemies.

S: Then isn't there the trap of always looking for justification for what you are doing?

TR: You don't look for justification. If you look for justification, that means you are not communicating properly, because you have to refer back. For a moment you have to close yourself inwardly, and then you expose again. Such an alternation of that and this doesn't happen in the case of the warrior. Instead, it's an ongoing process; you do not have to refer back and work out a strategy anymore. The strategy happens through the situation as it is. The situation speaks for you.

Student: When you have some obstacle or weakness in your nature that you recognize, should you take that as part of the situation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, exactly. That is the situation.

S: And whatever judgment you have about a situation is the situation also?

TR: I wouldn't say judgment. Whatever situation happens presents itself to you—beyond judgment.

S: Are thoughts included?

TR: Perceptions of situations are. Yes, definitely. But this has nothing to do with judgment.

Student: I'm not understanding the power aspect. What's the relationship between the blind quality of forging ahead and the power of the warrior? They seem to be related, but I can't put them together.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Do you mean, what is the relationship between the blind quality and the warrior quality? Naturally, whenever there is a tendency to refer back to oneself, that is the power aspect of building something up because you would like to overpower others. In order to overpower others, you have to develop strong qualities in yourself, and that completely undermines the actual situation happening there. Power knows no logic; power just operates. If anything gets in its way or challenges it, the natural instinct is just to smash it rather than to try to develop a relationship with it. It has a sort of blind quality and is a pure ongoing process based on some central theme or characteristic. So it is very much referred back to *me*: "If that happens, then what happens to *me*? And therefore, how should I act for *my* benefit alone?"

It's like the two ideas of compassion we discussed earlier. One is that *you* would like to see somebody happy; the other is that you help somebody because *they* need you, which is a different idea altogether. The first type of compassion is based on overpowering, undermining the colorful and beautiful aspect of situations, and trying to mold them into your shape, your pattern; whereas the other is just purely relating with the situation as it is and working along with it, which is the warrior quality. The warrior has to make every move of his or her practice of fighting in accordance with that without failing. If he reflects back on himself for one moment, one flash of a second; if he reflects back on his territory, his ego, his survival, then he's going to get killed, because he wasn't quick enough to relate purely with things as they are.

S: If we act only in response to people's needs—if we wait to be asked—will we still have plenty to do?

TR: You wouldn't wait to be asked. You don't have to put yourself in such a formal situation.

S: No, but sometimes we act because the situation obviously requires help, and sometimes we act because we project a need onto the situation.

TR: Yes, I see what you mean.

S: So if we eliminate that one side of our behavior based on projection, will we still have enough to do?

TR: You begin to realize what you have been missing. Situations are there always.

Student: It seems to me it is very difficult to help. I would very much like to help people and I have plenty of opportunities, but it is not an

easy thing. One has to be pretty advanced. It seems to me that in order to have compassion one has to be passionate as well, otherwise you are always working through your ego and you are half dead and half alive.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, getting tired of helping, feeling that it's too monotonous, happens because you want to get feedback in terms of ego.

S: No, I want to help people, but my helping people is blocked.

TR: Well, one should continuously do it, continuously put oneself in the situation of helping. And generally, that doesn't mean that once you try to help somebody that's going to be the whole experience at all. It takes practice. And practice means making mistakes as well as learning something out of those mistakes. So it needs continual persistent action going on all the time. It doesn't mean that one or two times is going to be the perfect situation at all, by any means. The whole thing is very manual. You learn by mistakes; you learn also by the skillful means you've been practicing. There will be occasional shocking experiences of yourself, and there will be occasional surprising experiences of yourself, that you've undermined yourself so much. So helping another person is also knowing oneself in this case, trusting oneself.

Student: Could you discuss our relationship to our body? Is it important to be concerned with diet or yogic practices or breathing exercises?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In connection with what?

S: In connection with learning to see what is.

TR: Well, body doesn't have to be a special thing. The whole world is your body. There's a tendency to view the body as your private possession. And because of that you tend to forget the rest of the world and the greater orbit of experience involved with that. If a person is able to relate with the world, he is also able to relate with the body. And if a person is able to relate with the body thoroughly, then that person also would learn how to open to the world. It's sort of an arbitrary thing: fundamentally, relationship to body is relationship to *things*, objects, that aspect of solidity which continues everywhere in the world, constantly.

S: So trying to purify your body doesn't affect consciousness?

TR: There again, it depends on your attitude. If you are working on the body, purifying the body in order to purify the mind, then it could become self-deception, because you are working purely from one direction. In order to purify mind, you could work directly with mind rather than working with the body. And if that is the case, needless to say, why

don't we just work directly rather than using a middle man, if that is the object?

S: If you're purifying the mind, does the body just kind of follow along with it?

TR: Well, that's the next question.

S: Is it only *your* mind that you have to purify?

TR: One mind, did you say? Well, it's difficult to say one mind or many minds; it's like talking about one space and many spaces. But you see, [*Trungpa Rinpoche lights a cigarette*] the point in looking at the relationship of body and mind is to discover how much of the body is the true body and how much of the body is an imaginary body. And if we involve ourselves with such complications, we have to involve ourselves with a whole theology, which may take thirteen or fourteen years to try to work out.

Student: Rinpoche, what is resistance and what is its relationship to wisdom? It seems that when I'm just being passive, resistance dissipates into no resistance.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Usually any kind of resistance is a reminder either that you're going too far or you are not going far enough. It is a sort of natural force which works in that way. And when you realize that, you no longer have to view resistance as a problem or an obstacle or as something that you have to destroy or overcome before you discover the truth.

S: Is that an act of wisdom?

TR: That is an act of wisdom, yes.

Student: Rinpoche, could you talk about active and passive? It seems that there's a need to be passive, simply to attend, and at the same time it seems like there's also a need for action.

Trungpa Rinpoche: They don't occur as contradictions as such. It's a natural situation. In actual fact, there's no such thing really as absolute passivity or absolute activity. Active is, I suppose you could say, penetrating involvement; and passive is the space or atmosphere around where you are involving yourself. So they go together. You have to have both of them or neither of them. It seems that the speed of action cannot survive without something to relate to the action. In other words, you can't play music without silence; silence is part of the music as well.

SEVEN

The Bardo of Existence

HUNGER AND THIRST and trying to find an alternative to them is the realm where we are today, the hungry ghost realm. (It is interesting that the subject we are working on and studying together always has relevance to each day's change of temperament and mood. That seems to be quite a curious coincidence.) Hunger and thirst also could be said to be waiting, or expectation. There is a constant demand for something, constantly being busy at something, constantly wanting to learn, constantly wanting to know, wanting to "get it." So one subject connected with the hungry ghost realm is the disease of the learners, or the hang-up of learners. There is so much ambition and hunger to learn something, to know something, which is connected with expectations as well. And that in itself, that ambition to learn, is the obstacle to learning.

You might ask, "Shouldn't we have ambition? Shouldn't we be conscientious and drive ourselves to knowledge? Shouldn't we work hard on our homework? Shouldn't we read hundreds of books? Shouldn't we become successful? Shouldn't we not only be good students, but become famous teachers?" There is that kind of chain reaction of building up status, building up your collection of knowledge, which may be necessary if you only want to *learn*, and if you know that learning is purely a technical thing with no reference to *knowing* at all. You can learn without knowing, and you could become a teacher by being learned—but it is not possible to become wise by becoming a good student. Through this ambition that we put out, in this hunger for knowledge, every word is questioned, sucked in by our pure desire, by our magnetizing state of mind, in order to gain something.

There is a difference between that kind of hunger and grasping, and actual communication with the subject that you're going to learn, making an actual relationship with the subject. It is like the difference between reading the menu and deciding to eat. If you have a clear idea what kind of food you want to eat, you don't have to read the menu—you immediately order it. But in fact we seem to spend so much time just reading the menu. There are all sorts of temptations of possible dishes: "Shall we order this or that? That sounds good as well. I never tasted this, but it sounds foreign; it sounds good, exotic. Shall we have a drink before we order? Shall we have wine with the meal? What shall we do?" Such a scene is created around just purely reading the menu. "And before we read the menu, should we have something special, so we are inspired to read the menu? Appetizers? Cookies and nuts?"

Also, of course, the secret criteria that we use in ordering the food, reading the menu, are very embarrassing ones which we don't want to share with anybody. They are purely restricted to you, particularly if you have invited guests. You don't talk about how much it costs; you just talk about what would be a nice thing to eat. You are tasteful in public, with your friends, but in actual fact you are thinking about how much it's going to cost. If you are a very efficient person, you will work out the total price, depending on how many people are going to eat. A whole culture is based around the eating and drinking process, a whole independent culture, another kind of civilization, almost. As far as your experience in that particular restaurant is concerned, the whole world is eating there. It's another world. Everybody's complaining; everybody's ordering; everybody's eating; everybody's drinking; everybody's paying; and more people are coming, more and more. Everybody's being served. It is the world of the *hungry* ghosts.

If we simplify, we eat because we are hungry and we drink because we are thirsty. But somehow, that primeval motive is not relevant anymore. We don't eat because we are hungry; we eat because we want the taste, or because we want to go out. The whole idea of going to a restaurant to eat is because it is different, a change from home cooking, a way of relaxing in many cases. We choose from one highlight to another highlight—constantly changing, all the time.

According to the scriptures there are several types of craziness or levels of hallucinations involved in the realm of the hungry ghosts. In the first stage, you dream of food, how delicious it will be to have it. For

instance, you may have an irresistible driving force to have chocolate ice cream. You have this whole image of chocolate ice cream in our mind. In fact, you reach the meditative state of chocolate ice cream. You see it in your vision, your hallucination. The whole world becomes that shape.

Seeing the world as a gigantic chocolate ice cream waiting for you, you go toward it. But when you get near it, the chocolate ice cream begins to become just a pile of rocks, or a dry tree. That's a second kind of hallucination.

A third type of hallucination begins with having a certain idea of food in your mind, a hallucinatory or visionary quality of food. You have in your mind a strong driving force to work for it and eat it, and that driving force goes on and on. In the distance you see food being served and you go there—but suddenly the hostess and the waitresses and waiters become the guardians of the food. Instead of serving you, they have swords, armor, and sticks to ward you off. But the food is still visible in the middle of that whole scene. That's a third type of hallucination of the hungry ghost realm.

And then there is the fourth type. You see the food and you have a tremendous desire to eat. Your desire to eat becomes very active and aggressive, so you have to fight with those guardians and knock them out. Then you rush to the food, you pick it up and eat it. But the minute you swallow it, it turns into flames in your stomach and begins to burn you.

These are all analogies of the different degrees of hunger. That grasping quality of the hungry ghost realm could take different shapes. It could take the shape of some kind of communication with the food or the object of desire—but that could be distorted, once you see it as it is. Or that grasping could be seen as a succession of situations you have to go through, like the person who eats and then finds that the food becomes flames in the stomach. These particular types of hunger and thirst give a general feeling of the hungry ghost realm.

But there's something more than that. In terms of bardo experience, the particular type of bardo experience associated with the hungry ghost realm is called sipa bardo, the bardo of existence, creation, or becoming. You actually manufacture a completely new experience, another type of experience. And the particular experience of sipa bardo, the bardo of existence, is the threshold between grasping with hunger and the experience of letting go—not quite letting go, but the experience of giving

up—in other words, giving up hope. Giving up hope doesn't mean just naively declining, or giving up hope purely out of frustration, that you can't bear it anymore. The absence of hope in this case is based on being able to see the humorous situation of the moment, developing a heightened sense of humor. You see that your striving and grasping is too serious and too concentrated. A person can't have a sense of humor, generally, unless he or she is extremely serious. At the height of seriousness, you burst into laughter. It's too funny to be serious, because there is a tendency to see the contrast of it. In other words, humor cannot exist without contrast, without two situations playing. And you are seeing the humorous quality of that.

So what is lacking in the hungry ghost realm is humor. It is a deadly honest search, seriously searching, seriously grasping. This could apply to seriously searching spiritually or materialistically, anything: seriously making money, seriously meditating with such a solemn face. It could be said to be like perching, as though you were a chicken just about to give birth to an egg. In my personal experience, you see this with babies. When you begin to see a serious face on a baby, you have to make sure that there is a diaper. When we want something, usually we perch very seriously. It is completely humorless. You want to give birth to something: you're trying to pass through, or manufacture something. Then you grasp it, possess it, eat it, chew it, swallow it.

The world of the hungry ghosts, or pretas, is based on the seriousness of wanting to grasp something, and it is heightened by the bardo experience to the point where you are not actually hungry anymore. You see, that's the difference between the bardo experience and the ordinary hungry ghost experience. In the ordinary hungry ghost experience, you are hungry; in the bardo experience of the absolute intensity of hunger, you are not hungry anymore. Because the vision of whatever you want to have is so much in your mind, you reach a certain kind of obsession. In fact, you are so overwhelmed by the desire of wanting something that you forget you are hungry, that you're starving. You become more concerned with the presence of what you want; you begin to become one with the presence of the thing you want. That's where the seriousness begins to be involved; that's where the perching begins to develop.

At that point it is possible to develop a sense of humor and be able to see that you are actually perching. And you begin to see the ironic aspect of it. Then there's no hunger and no hallucination or desire. That

is beyond the bardo experience, when you get through it. But when you are in it, the seriousness still continuously goes on. That's the hungry ghost experience, or the bardo of existence. So fundamentally this realm is based on the relationship between the self-conscious ego, myself, and me. That ego wants to be; it wants to have certain particular things as "my idea"; it wants to be fulfilled. The frustration comes from the danger of its not being able to be fulfilled completely and properly.

Student: When Gautama Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree and he was being tempted by the maras, he vowed to attain enlightenment even if his bones crumbled and turned into dust. In that situation, would he be in the hungry ghost realm? It seems like a sort of hopeless seriousness.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Exactly, yes. You see, once you reach the higher spiritual levels of enlightenment, the higher your state, the more advanced your state of development, the more temptations there are. Therefore the temptations also become very sophisticated as you become more sophisticated. This goes on and on. That is exactly the point of the hosts of mara beginning to attack the Buddha. I would say that point is the most advanced level of the hungry ghost realm, in a sense, in terms of our own personal experiences. That is why the maras have to come and why the temptations of mara are necessary. They are exactly what is needed in order to provide contrast between awake and confusion.

Student: Rinpoche, you said the danger is in being unsatisfied. What did you mean by that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I suppose it is the possibility of continuing in a state of confusion and not being able to make a relationship with present experience. The danger in this case is the possibility of being extremely self-creative, as opposed to self-destructive, meaning the destruction of ego. Instead you could become extremely self-creative, learning how to play the game of ego and how to develop all sorts of luxurious ways of feeding and comforting ego—an ego-fattening process.

Student: Would you say something about how the energy ends up in this hunger where you are looking at the menu and looking at the waitresses and looking at how much it's going to cost and whether your friend has ordered something better than you? All of this is enough to put a person in bed for a couple of hours because he's run out of energy.

How is it that you do not use up all your energy when you're with your friends in that way?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There again it's a completely humorless situation. Everything is regarded as an extreme case.

S: It doesn't seem very funny to be worrying about all these various things.

TR: It would be funny if you realized what was happening.

Student: You said that the hosts of mara are necessary in order to provide contrast. Is that because the hosts of mara bring confusion to its peak?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Exactly, yes. Very sophisticated confusion, purely matching the possible awake state that you're going to attain. It's equal. Yes.

S: So one should not really have to strive to develop that completely, but just accept it and not try to call it awake.

TR: Once you accept it, it becomes the force of compassion. In the story of the Buddha, each arrow shot at him turned into a flower. There wouldn't be flowers unless the maras shot arrows. So the whole thing becomes a creative process, a rain of flowers. Each act of aggression becomes loving-kindness, compassion.

S: That's the thing. When you get into confusion, it becomes overcrowding sometimes, and the temptation then is to move away from the confusion.

TR: Yes, that's the general temptation. But then what happens is that the temptation follows you all the way. When you try to run away, the faster you try to run, the faster the temptation comes to you all the time—unless you decide not to run. You're providing more feedback to the temptation when you decide to try to get away, unless you are willing to make a relationship with it.

Student: Could you say something about how this relates to the pain of sitting in meditation? There seems to be a possibility of accepting the pain, having it be just simply part of what is. But most of the time it's a teeth-gritting type of thing where you think, "When are they going to ring the damn bell?," hoping that something might drop and another might appear.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Again, it's the same thing. There is a certain ten-

dency to translate all mental pain and discomfort into physical discomfort. In sitting meditation, for instance, you imagine that getting up and walking away is the way to solve the pain—the psychological pain which has been translated into physical pain. That is a kind of confusion. If a person is able to relate with the irritation and the pain of sitting, he or she sees that it is nothing more than purely looking for another change, away from the psychological level. In that sense, of course, pain becomes irrelevant.

S: I was a bit lost on that. That state of gritting—what can let go of that in the right way?

TR: If you are able to see that you are perching, then the whole tension that has built up becomes different; and in fact, it won't be there anymore. It needs humor, a sense of humor, all the time. You see, a sense of humor is associated with the living, a lively situation. Without a sense of humor there is the solemnness associated with death, a dead body. It's completely rigid, cold, serious, and honest—but you can't move. That's the true distinction.

Student: Jesus said about the lilies of the field, "Be not anxious, saying what shall we eat, what shall we drink? Consider the lilies of the field: they toil not, neither do they spin. But I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not as attired as these." Could you comment on this?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems self-evident, self-explanatory. It's the same as the Zen saying, "When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep."

Student: When you talked about the temptations of mara, you said that as we go along they become more and more subtle. Could you relate the meditative absorption in the world of the gods to those kinds of temptations? What's the difference between the meditative absorption in the god world and temptation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a good one. You see, the interesting point is that in the complete meditative absorption of the world of the gods, there wouldn't be temptation because nobody wants or demands your attention. You are paying full attention all the time to ego. So the maras are satisfied. They don't have to try to shake you back, bring you back to samsara—you are already in samsara and you are grooving on it. It seems as if temptation can only occur if you are trying to get away from centralized ego.

S: When you are in a blissful state, you are also perching?

TR: Yes. You are perching. Perching is the self-consciousness of not knowing how to relate with situations and so trying to work out some strategy. That moment of contemplating strategy is perching, so to speak.

S: Are you a hungry ghost?

TR: Yes, a hungry ghost as well. That is quite so, because you want to get more and more feedback continuously, all the time.

S: So there is not a situation when you are just in the world of the devas, the world of the gods, because when you are in the world of the gods you are also a hungry ghost?

TR: That's right, yes. But it's less dramatic, because when you are in the world of the gods, the whole situation is more relaxed and self-satisfactory.

S: Yes, but you somehow unconsciously want to remain in it, or if you fall down to the world of the asuras, you want to go back to it. So you are a hungry ghost.

TR: Yes. You see, you could say that all six realms have a hungry ghost quality of one kind or another, because all six worlds consist of grasping and hanging on. That quality is always there. But when we talk about the hungry ghost realm as in independent thing, it's more obvious, more vivid.

Student: In Buddha's temptation, could you explain his saying, "Go away!"—in a sense rejecting the beautiful girls and the food offered him and the monsters? Is there a place in our meditation for saying, "Go away"?

Trungpa Rinpoche: No, I don't think so, because you are not at that stage.

Student: Are all the bardo states ego?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The bardo states *are* ego. Definitely, yes.

S: All of them.

TR: All of them. They are the heightened qualities of the different types of ego and the possibility of getting off ego. That's where bardo starts—the peak experience in which there is the possibility of losing the grip of ego and the possibility of being swallowed up in it. There is that kind of confusion between freedom and escape, freedom and imprisonment.

S: So in each bardo state, there's a possibility of escape?

TR: I think so, yes. The Buddha described that in the scriptures by an analogy. The bodhisattva's actions are as if you are about to step out of a room. At the point when one leg is outside the door and one leg is inside the door, the bodhisattva wonders whether he or she should step back or proceed. That's an analogy for bardo.

Student: Could you get hung up on the bardo state? Instead of passing through the bardo experience, could you get hung up and just stay there, like in the realm of the hungry ghosts?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, you can. You can. That's a very interesting point. In that case it is the level of madness, you are hung up on it. Exactly.

S: So what do you do then?

TR: There's nothing that you can do, in terms of changing the situation of the moment. The only way to relate is by trying to relate with the actual experience of pain and pleasure as an earthy, earthy situation. That's the only way of getting out of madness. Madness is extreme spacing; it is without solidness in relationship to earth.

Student: Did I understand you to say that when you are in the world of the gods, you have your ego?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes.

S: Oh, that's very disappointing.

TR: I know.

S: Then one should not attempt to meditate more. If one is more and more in the state of meditation, then one should try not to be, because then one is a hungry ghost.

TR: Exactly. That's it exactly, precisely.

Student: Is that so? One should try *not* to be in a state of meditation?

TR: Exactly. You see, that's the point of meditation in action—that at a certain level the meditative state becomes too static, and then the important point is the bodhisattva's action.

S: But the meditative state is an action; it's quite literally an action. Should you try to act without being in a meditative state because even in action you want to be in a meditative state, and so it is still hungry ghost?

TR: Yes. The point of action in this case does not mean you have to try to maintain a meditative state and act simultaneously, as though you were trying to manage two at the same time. But action is that you truly act, you act properly. The idea of saying, "When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep," is acting properly, thoroughly, and completely. That is stepping out of dwelling on something. You see, meditation in the pejorative sense is dwelling on something. Action demands attention. You go along with that particular paying attention to situations and working skillfully with situations without reference back to yourself—how you should act, how you shouldn't act. You just act.

Student: How does patience come into all this?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Patience is not expecting an immediate answer if you experience pain—not trying to change pain into pleasure. It is the willingness to submit yourself to the situation, to wait. In other words, you are willing to see properly and clearly. When we are completely wrapped up in situations without patience, we become blind.

Student: You said in the beginning that consciousness is the last development of the ego. If eventually we wish to give up our ego, does that mean that we will lose our consciousness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Consciousness in this case means something quite different from the ordinary sense of consciousness as being aware of what's going on. In terms of the development of ego, consciousness is centralized consciousness—always relating backward and forward. It's not consciousness of what's going on, but consciousness as to whether you are maintaining your ego or not. This kind of consciousness is quite different from simply being aware. In fact, you can't gain complete consciousness until you step out of ego. Then consciousness begins to become the play or the dance, *lalita,* where you actually dance with the rhythm of situations. That sort of transcendental consciousness is quite different from the one-track-mind consciousness of ego.

Student: Why is your ego involved in the world of the gods?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Because the world of the gods is a sophisticated state of ego, where you experience pleasure all the time. And once you experience pleasure, then you want to retain your pleasure. You always want to refer back to yourself. That is ego.

Student: Could "resting" have anything to do with true meditation, as opposed to the pejorative kind? Being at rest?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends on whether you are just resting, being in a state of rest, or whether you are resting *for* something.

S: No, no. Being in a state of rest as opposed to doing something. In other words, you said that the pejorative kind of meditation was dwelling on something. I'm saying, could the opposite kind—true meditation—be just being at rest?

TR: It could be, yes. I mean, there again, rest without any relativities—just being is rest.

Student: Is sitting meditation action, in terms of breathing and the heart beating and sitting—or is it mental? You said the other day to forget the body and deal directly with mind, but then you said that it had to be meditation in action. So I wonder, what is the principal expression of action in sitting meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is a general comprehension of the relationship with earth, rather than regarding the earth as separate from you, as though it were your opponent—which involves the body. The earth is not regarded as an opponent or an extra thing, but is part of the earthy quality of mind, which is quite different.

S: Is the doorway to that through mind, or is it through the body? Or is it through some other way, like paying attention to one's thoughts?

TR: I would say both—body and thoughts.

Student: How do you step out of ego?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose, you could say, by developing a friendly relationship with ego.

S: Then it becomes more inflated, like a balloon.

TR: You mean ego itself, if you are trying to like it, trying to love it? No, ego wouldn't like that. Ego would like to be the boss all the time.

Student: In the realm of the gods, if there is wisdom and the joy of being, I take it that you say that this relates back to pleasure and to ego taking its pleasure. But isn't there a joy of being that transcends the pleasure-pain principle?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There may be, but at the same time, as you experience it, there is a watcher happening. That's the problem.

S: In other words, the gods experience the experience and the experiencer.

TR: The experience and the experiencer, yes. You may be experiencing some transcendental experience of going beyond something; but at the same time, there is an experiencer who takes note of that.

S: And this is the great temptation with the realm of the gods?

TR: Yes, exactly, because then you are getting something. You are getting more and more feedback, more food to sustain yourself—until you realize that there's nothing to transcend at all.

S: But isn't there a joy that's a simple expression of the earth's own energy? Just simple energy, a kind of lightness?

TR: Definitely, yes. But that's a simple one, isn't it? Therefore it is more difficult.

Student: How is it possible not to ask a hungry ghost question?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You can't. Once you begin to try to do that, then that in itself is a hungry ghost act. There's no end to it.

Student: I read somewhere that when Mara came to Buddha, Buddha recognized her as being a part of himself, and he was compassionate because he already had loving-kindness. And I was very impressed with this, because this might be a very good way of dealing with one's ego, or oneself. He recognized that she was only a part of him.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. In fact, Milarepa's song about his experience of the temptation of the maras is like that. When he tried to use mantras as spells to exorcise them, nothing worked. But the moment he realized they were his own projections, they vanished.

Student: When you get to the point where you feel that you can't laugh, even though you know intellectually the absurdity of where you're at and you see that you're perching—is there anything you can do to go a step further, so you could break through that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that that moment is a very sensitive moment, in which you don't have to try to do anything at all. You just have to be patient and go a little bit further—but not watch yourself experiencing that. Just go a step further. Then you begin to develop a sense of humor about it, that the whole thing is a game, however seri-

ous. You see, the whole thing that we have been talking about—*how* to conduct ourselves, *how* to do things, *how* to get out, all this—once you begin to regard any method or practice as a sedative, or a way of getting out, then it doesn't work anymore, it's another way of self-deception. In other words, if you regard the skillful means or methods as ways of escaping, as medicine, then nothing works. It's as simple as that.

Student: Is the bodhisattva path an expression of a hungry ghost?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Definitely not.

S: From what you were saying, it seems to have some of that character. Is taking the bodhisattva vow the expression of a hungry ghost?

TR: I don't think so, but again, there are different types of bodhisattvas. You could be an evangelical bodhisattva or you could be just a bodhisattva bodhisattva. Taking the bodhisattva vow is just a commitment—going further. In fact, you are deliberately taking a vow not to refer to yourself at all—that *I* am going to be taking a vow, that *I* am going to become a bodhisattva. I am just a simple, insignificant person; what is more important are all sentient beings, they are more important than I am.

S: Is there some way in meditation to avoid watching the processes that go on in your mind?

TR: That's exactly why techniques are important in meditation. You have been given certain techniques, and you can go along with them without watching—because whenever there's a watcher involved, that means you are intellectualizing your meditation, you're not actually feeling it. Techniques make you feel it. For instance, the technique of following the breath makes you feel the breath completely. So you go along completely with the technique, whether the technique is for sitting meditation or for walking meditation, or whatever it may be. That is automatically a way of stepping out of the watcher; whereas, if you're trying to suppress the watcher, then that in itself becomes another watcher, and it goes on and on and on. So instead of approaching the watcher from the front door, we are approaching it from the back door: that's the technique of meditation.

Student: Rinpoche, if one were looking at what we are doing, going through life, as a jigsaw puzzle, a strange puzzle, how would you relate the pieces in the puzzle to, say, freedom or so-called mystical experiences?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, there again it's a question of approaching it from the back door or approaching it from the front door. All the pieces of the puzzle are not the answer; it's the ground where your jigsaw puzzle is situated.

S: You mean they're all the same?

TR: All the same, yes. But at the same time, the ground makes it possible to have a jigsaw puzzle displayed.

Student: In the realm of the gods, does everybody that you see appear to you to be a god, and you yourself feel like a god?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes. It's the same thing with hatred, for instance. If you hate yourself, you hate everybody, and you hallucinate that everybody is aggravating your hatred. The same thing applies the other way around. As long as you centralize your attention inwardly, to a personal involvement with ego, that puts out similar kinds of radiation continuously.

S: So the best you can do is to try somehow to realize that you're in a given state. It's like you get so caught up in it that if you can somehow realize that that's what you're doing, or somehow realize that you're seeing everybody in a certain way, then you have a chance to get a bigger picture.

TR: Well, yes. It's a question of seeing things as they are, rather than your version. If you have jaundice, you see every white as yellow. That's the analogy which has been used.

S: So no matter what color of sunglasses you are wearing, you're always tinting things one way or another.

TR: Yes.

Student: If I may I use the word *high* for a moment—whether it be mildly drug-induced or just suddenly feeling like you're a god, you know, and you look around at your friends and you feel a definite change of consciousness and you feel like you're in a royal court and you're all gods and goddesses inhabiting the planet—is that sort of a bardo experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I would say that's the realm of the gods experience—the ground where bardo is developing.

Student: You said that the hungry ghost world was the disease of the learner. My questions are from that framework—to learn. If that's the

framework, you said that the food given to the hungry ghost turns to fire in his stomach. Sometimes I get that same sensation from your answers—often. And other times I get the opposite feeling—of encouragement, or the suggestion to do it this way or such-and-such. But both questions seem to be motivated from that learning point of view.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's the interesting point. It is like the idea of transmission, which takes place not only by the power of the teacher but also through the openness of the student. The meeting of the two minds takes place simultaneously, and then transmission takes place on the spot. So I would say that in the same way what happens generally is that we try to cover ourselves up—all the time. But there are occasional gaps where we forget ourselves, we forget to cover up. Likewise, in this case there will be gaps of open mind which transcend the hungry ghost level. That's the whole point. Otherwise it would seem that whatever you do is hungry ghost, there would be no way out at all—but that is not so.

All the experiences of bardo and of the different types of realms are patches of experiences—not completely covered whole situations. That is why there are possibilities of sudden experiences like satori. Sudden experiences of intelligence, or buddha nature, come through on and off. One doesn't have to achieve complete perfection trying to bring up that experience all the time, necessarily; but the occasion to acknowledge yourself as a hungry ghost and the occasion to acknowledge yourself as transcending the hungry ghosts take place alternatingly, all the time.

Student: The desire of ego to be fulfilled—how does one liberate those desires of fulfillment that ego presents? Is it by fulfilling them and actually experiencing the fulfillment? Will that satisfy it? Does one have to see that and liberate it by going through the experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that trying to fulfill is another escape—equally the same as trying to suppress. Generally there is a conflict between you and your experiences, your desires. It is a kind of game between ego and its extensions. Sometimes ego tries to overpower the projections, and sometimes the projections try to overpower ego—that kind of battle goes on all the time. So the point is to see that battle as it is, rather than fulfill the desires or suppress them.

Student: Is the hunger for enlightenment related to this other hunger that you're talking about?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Definitely.

S: Then you have to stop wanting to be enlightened, is that the idea? Because if you're hungry for enlightenment, if you want it, it would seem as though you'd have to quit thinking about it or something.

TR: Well, you see, the point is the same as in the bodhisattva path, in which you transcend the desire for the attainment of enlightenment and continuously work along the path. In that case, the path is the goal and the goal is the path. Then enlightenment becomes almost a by-product rather than a deliberate aim.

S: You have to give up thinking about enlightenment and just do it?

TR: In terms of ambitions, yes.

S: But don't we understand Buddha to have been a bodhisattva already before he sat down under the bodhi tree? Isn't that the way he's usually understood?

TR: Yes, exactly.

S: But you said that his vow when he sat down was an expression of the highest level of a hungry ghost. If he was a bodhisattva, how could he also be an expression of a hungry ghost?

TR: Well, it happens continuously. That's why he's a bodhisattva; that's why he's not yet Buddha. It has been said that once a bodhisattva reaches the tenth stage of the path, which is next to the enlightenment state, his view of apparent phenomena, or his projections, is like vision by full moonlight. He sees things relatively precisely and clearly, but not as clearly as by sunlight. That's why he is a bodhisattva; he has some more to go.

Student: Would you give an example of being friendly to your ego?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is a kind of communication and understanding of the mechanism of ego and not trying to suppress it or condemn it, but using ego as a stepping-stone, as a ladder. All the concepts and ideas of path and vehicles that we discussed are partly the formation of ego. In fact, the very idea of enlightenment exists because of ego—because there is contrast. Without ego there wouldn't be the very notion of enlightenment at all.

Student: Could you say something about being fully awakened and the bardo levels? For instance, the bodhisattva is still treading through

the six levels, but when he becomes fully awakened in buddhahood, does he still work through these levels in his bodhisattva role?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think so, for the very fact that there is no role. I mean, a buddha begins to realize that he has no role to play anymore, but to be.

S: But then would he still be a bodhisattva?

TR: He would be a compassionate person, in terms of a bodhisattva, but he would transcend changing into different levels because in that state, knowledge begins to become a part of him rather than being absolutely learned, in which case knowledge and oneself are still separate things.

Student: Is awakening in one of the realms good for all of them?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Any kind of awake is just awake—in any realm.

Student: I think you helped me see again today how a lot of the way I think about enlightenment has to do with my ego. Ego thinks it's so special, that it deserves something special—this word *enlightenment* sounds like it's right up ego's alley. I watch how my ego seems repulsed by the idea that it could be something ordinary. I get very confused at that point, the way ego looks upon enlightenment. Right here, it's very ordinary and simple—and then somehow it's very revolting and repelling. It's like I don't want to be like the other people here or the ordinary people out in the street. Ego seems to take that attitude.

TR: Yes, that's quite an interesting point. The awake state is the ordinary of the ordinary—an absolutely insignificant thing, completely insignificant. It's nothing, actually. And if you see it that way, then with all the expectations it built up, ego is really going to suffer and be irritated.

S: But even the path sometimes inflates the ego.

TR: Yes, sure it does. Therefore your relationship to the path should also be an ordinary one.

S: But even with the ordinary, the ego is still there, choosing something or other.

TR: Yes, that's always the danger: if we place more emphasis on being extraordinary or on being ordinary, it's almost saying the same thing in terms of ego.

S: Then it seems that you can't get away from it in any way.

TR: That's the whole point. Give in and stop trying to do anything at all. It is a kind of judo play: you don't push ego but ego is pushing you, which becomes ego throwing itself away by itself.

Student: Rinpoche, is there any difference between enlightenment and freedom, or are they one and the same?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In the ultimate sense, they are the same.

Student: In regard to seeing through one's projections, I get the feeling sometimes that you can't see anything at all, that all you can see is your projections. Does that have something to do with just shutting up?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think so. It's the opposite.

S: I don't mean shutting up; I mean shutting up talking.

TR: No, no. Even metaphorically it is not closing. It is the opposite—really connecting, communication.

EIGHT

The Bardo of Death

This talk began with a long period of silence during which Trungpa Rinpoche was hidden from the audience by a large folding mirror. From behind the mirror he shouted, "Hell!" This was followed by a loud and long burst of laughter from the audience, after which the mirror was removed, and the talk continued.

HELL. THE EXPERIENCE OF hell comes from deliberate, basic aggression. That aggression is the opposite of patience. Patience usually means being extremely kind and cool. But here patience seems to have a different meaning than just keeping your cool. In this case, it is not only keeping your cool, but it is seeing the situation in its fullest extent. Such patience could be said to be active, extremely active and energetic. It is not necessarily a lot of waiting—waiting for things to happen, waiting to see. Instead, patience is having a proper relationship or exchange with the situation as it is. And you are part of that situation. It is not that you are working on some strategy as to how to work with it.

The basic aggression of hell comes from your wanting to destroy your projection. It is natural aggression: you want to destroy the mirror. As projection works as it is, in a very efficient and accurate way, it becomes too embarrassing. You don't want to go along with it. Instead of seeing the naked truth, you want to destroy the mirror—to the extent of not only destroying the projection, or the mirror, but also the perceiver of that mirror. The perceiver is also extremely painful, so there is the suicidal mentality of wanting to destroy the perceiver of the mirror as well as the mirror itself. There is constant struggle, destruction, going on.

The bardo connected with the experience of hell, the bardo of death,

has to do with the claustrophobia of pain and pleasure, the sudden peak of anger in which you do not know whether you are actually trying to destroy something or whether you are trying to achieve something by destroying. It is this ambiguous quality of destruction and creation. Naturally, of course, destruction is in itself creation. But somehow there's a conflict. You have created destruction, therefore it is creation. In other words, one is not quite certain—because of the energy, because of the speed that you go through—whether you are actually going or coming. The moment you think you are going, you discover that you are coming. That extreme speed of running, rushing, becomes confusing, which is the particular peak experience of the bardo of death.

Death could be said to be birth at the same time, from this point of view. The moment something ends, the next birth takes place naturally. So death is the re-creating of birth. It is the same idea as reincarnation, the rebirth process. There is also the realization of death as being constant death. Things cannot exist or develop without momentum. Changing is taking place always, constantly. That is why the teachings place tremendous importance on the realization of impermanence. Impermanence becomes extremely important at this particular point of aggression. Aggression is trying to freeze the space, still trying to sterilize the space. But when you begin to see the impermanence, you cannot solidify space anymore. That then is the peak experience of transcending aggression.

As we discussed yesterday in regard to hunger, if you are fully involved with the bardo experience of one of the six realms, you also experience your neighboring territory. This also applies to aggression, or the hell realm, which is next to the hungry ghost realm. So another aspect of aggression, or hell experience, could also be self-pity, completely closing in, self-condemnation. You condemn yourself because there is nothing attractive in you at all, nothing beautiful. You would basically like to destroy yourself or escape from yourself.

That kind of self-condemning quality in oneself could be said to be very positive in a way. You are just about to discover the opposite of that; you are just about to see the alternatives. Because of the possibility of alternatives, you ask questions based on being other than what you are, other than where you're at, which is a very healthy situation. In that sense, condemnation could be said to be inspiration—as long as the person can proceed further with that condemnation, to a further experience of himself. The condemner, or the person who condemns, and that

which is the object of condemnation are different. As long as one is able to get knowledge of the subject, that particular condemner is removed. In other words, the watcher is removed.

When that instinct—that ego-centered notion of trying to achieve perfection, trying to achieve a perfect good thing—is removed, the whole process changes. One's whole attitude changes once you remove that. Yet the condemnation in itself remains as an independent situation. And that particular independent situation, or condemning quality, contains light and space and questions and doubts and confusions. That such confusion and doubt and questions managed to be born brings the possibilities of the dawn breaking through. In the tantric analysis of this, it is said that the dawn of Vajrasattva is breaking through. That is to say, the dawn of indestructible continuity is just about to show through. Talking about aggression from this point of view becomes a creative thing. The whole pattern of aggression, of the hell realm, becomes very positive, something that we could work on.

Student: Can you talk about the creative aspects of paranoia?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is also exactly the same situation. If it is, so to speak, straight paranoia, then it is very positive. That kind of paranoia makes you see something, it makes you look into another territory, another area, whereas if it is diluted paranoia, which is to say manipulated paranoia, then you don't want to take off your paranoia at all. You would like to retain your paranoia as a cover, as a mask. All sorts of pretenses begin to be involved with that.

S: Can you explain that manipulated paranoia a little bit more?

TR: That kind of paranoia becomes comforting in some way because you could hide behind it. It keeps you company. Otherwise you feel alone, that nobody is with you, working with you. Paranoia is your only way of exercising action. Because of that, paranoia transforms into acting. Because of paranoia, you are inspired to do certain things. Then you begin to act as though you were not there at all, as though somebody else were taking you over or some other situation were taking you over. There is always a confused situation around you, and you try to immediately get into it and blow that situation up and make it into a shield. We generally become extremely clever at doing that. There's always something or other that we can catch at the last moment and make into a shield. That kind of paranoia is diluted paranoia as opposed to innocent

paranoia. It could also be called "the basic twist of ego," because that particular paranoia teaches us how to play ego's game of deaf and dumb.

Student: You said that self-condemnation or self-pity may be a positive action. Now, it is my experience from observing a lot of people that self-pity and self-condemnation decay into hate and withdrawal. I very rarely have seen people being able to get themselves out of this box. Yet you feel, from what I hear, that there seems to be a self-energizing element to it which forces people into self-examination, asking questions. I find this extremely rare, from what I have observed. I have wondered what was lacking in their lives, those who touched rock bottom more or less, flirted with suicide. I see very little evidence that something arises out of the ashes of self-destruction.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, the intelligence of self-condemnation has an extremely keen eye, keen sight. It sees every move and every mistake that you make. It is very precise and very clear. And this seems to come from the ego's inspiration of wanting to protect oneself. But somehow, strangely enough, it doesn't work like that: it works on a wider scale, beyond the ego level, as well. Even up to the extreme level of discriminating-awareness wisdom, there is this element. You see, the point is that intelligence is a neutral thing. A certain part of the intelligence is employed by ego, and a certain part of the intelligence is independent intelligence. Whenever you see a situation or see yourself beginning to play a game of any kind, then that intelligence becomes panoramic intelligence. It begins to see the situation as it is. So condemning could be said to be another way of shaking you up, or breaking you from the extreme belief of what you would like to be to what you are, in terms of ego. So it becomes a natural creative process as it is.

S: I think if I went deeper into it, though, once you are aware of all the things that go on, then the gulf seems that much deeper and the possibilities seem that much poorer.

TR: That is because you are looking from the point of view of the watcher. You are watching your condemnation, and you are manipulating it, you are commenting on it. That is why it becomes clumsy.

S: Without some energizing act to transcend this watching, you get fascinated by the self-condemnation. You wallow in self-pity. As I said before, I find it very rare that somebody boosts himself out of it. It does not seem to be self-energizing but proof of decay in so many cases.

TR: That is exactly the point that I'm trying to get at. Even if it is a self-congratulatory situation of pride, that pride and self-congratulation also do not have the inspiration of extending into limitlessness at all. From this point of view, self-congratulation and self-condemnation are exactly the same situation, because in both cases watcher is involved. Whenever there is no watcher involved, you are looking into the wide and wholly open ground of every situation, open space. You get an extreme aerial view of everything completely. That is why the analogy of the transformation of the negative into the positive, is very poor. In fact, it is a one-sided analogy.

S: You said that transforming the positive into the negative, or the negative into the positive, is a one-sided analogy. What's a better analogy?

TR: Well, obviously, it is to remove the watcher. Remove the criteria, the limited criteria. Once you have removed limited criteria, discriminating wisdom is automatically there. I wouldn't exactly call that a transformation in terms of changing one thing to another, bad into good. It is a kind of natural awakeness in which the negative *is* positive. The awakened state of negative is positive in its own raw and rugged quality.

S: What about transforming itself? Transforming anger into accomplishment, for instance?

TR: A whole range of transformations takes place all the time, of course. I would say the condemnation itself vanishes, but the intelligence and critical vision of the condemnation still remains. That is the ground on which positive things build.

Student: You said that the reason why you have a kind of a revelation, instead of the luxurious self-condemnation you might have had, is that you see yourself suddenly from an entirely different angle, and it's a big shock. You feel very terrible at the moment, but a very strange thing happens: afterward there is a great relief.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. That sounds right. You see, that whole idea is like the four noble truths. The first truth, the truth of suffering, is condemning samsara, how bad, how terrible it is, how painful it is. Out of that condemnation, the second truth is looking into the origin of pain, how it develops. From that the goal, the inspiration of the goal, develops, which is the third noble truth. And from there, the inspiration of the path develops as the fourth truth. So the whole thing works in that way.

Student: Can the watcher have a positive function, at least in the beginning stages of meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: At the beginning of the beginning, maybe. If the watcher is being used purely as an observer, then it is positive in a sense. But if the watcher is being used as a guardian, then it begins to become a different thing, because once you have a guard, the guard must know whom to allow, whom not to allow. Those kinds of criteria begin to develop.

S: So it would be in the sense of a fair witness that it could be positive.

TR: Just a witness, yes, pure witness. But that is dangerous to talk about or to recommend. Generally we have a tendency to overindulge in the watcher, which has possibilities of becoming a guardian.

S: So when you have a flash of anger, it might be good just to plunge right into it rather than observe it, I mean to really become that feeling.

TR: Exactly. That doesn't mean either that you should murder somebody or that you should suppress your anger. Just see the natural anger quality as it is, the abstract quality of anger, like the abstract quality of condemning yourself.

S: Do you see that by observing the feeling or by becoming one with the feeling?

TR: Becoming one with the feeling. It seems to be quite safe to say that every practice connected with the path is a practice associated with nonduality, becoming one with something or other.

Student: If a person is not aware of himself, then is he at one with himself—a person who is unaware of his or her anger, unaware of the things that he or she is going to do?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think so. There is a tremendous difference between being unaware of what is happening and identifying with what is happening. Being identified with what is happening is awake and precise, there is tremendous clarity in it; whereas when you don't know what is happening, there is tremendous confusion.

Student: It seems as if suicide would be a kind of ultimate egohood.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is what you are trying to do when you realize that you can't release yourself—so you destroy yourself purely in order to save face.

S: It seems that if ego actually can destroy you physically, it really must be something.

TR: Well, you see, ego cannot really destroy you at all. Suicide is another way of expanding ego's existence, proving ego's existence, because destroying the body doesn't mean destroying ego. So it's saving face.

Student: Are there negative emotions other than aggression in the realm of hell, such as fear or terror?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's all part of it. Fear and terror are part of the aggression, which is an absolutely highly developed state of mind of duality. Fear, for instance, is the absolute ultimate confusion of the relationship between you and your projections. That's why you get frightened.

Student: What's the difference between the color red of violent anger and the red of Amitabha Buddha?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Amitabha is like fire. The red of Amitabha has the quality of radiance extending to the point where there's no limit at all. That's why *Amitabha* means "limitless light." In terms of anger, red has an ovenlike quality. It's not like flames in the ordinary sense. It doesn't throw heat outward, but it throws heat inward, so we get baked in.

S: Does the oppressive quality, that feeling of being squeezed until there's no room, vanish if you stop watching?

TR: It seems that the watcher has this mentality of internalizing everything. Do you mean that?

S: It is like squeezing on yourself somehow, pushing against yourself or into yourself.

TR: That is the watcher. Yes.

Student: What did you mean by saying that you should become one with the impulse?

Trungpa Rinpoche: This is not introverted oneness but extroverted oneness, in the sense of going along with the speed of radiation, the pattern of radiation.

Student: Is there a clean, egoless anger?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That sounds like compassion.

Student: Could you discuss the use of sexual energy for spiritual development?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There is often a certain moral judgment which comes up in regard to this particular subject. If you look at it from a very rational point of view, then anger is the ultimate rejection, repelling; and putting anger into practice is destroying, killing. Desire, or passion, is magnetizing, grasping; and the ultimate expression of that is sexual experience. So from a rational point of view, we could say that if you recommend sexual experience as part of the spiritual path, then murdering somebody is also part of the spiritual path. Both apply, it seems.

But this is not quite so from the point of view of the true nature of the emotions. From this perspective, aggression is destroying; it is ultimately rejection, which is an uncompassionate act. But desire, or passion, is a compassionate act. At least it is accepting something, although it may have all sorts of neuroses involved with it. So that is the fundamental principle: compassion, love, and passion are all associated. And of course, sexual experience could be seen from that point of view to be an act of communication beyond words. On the other hand, it could also be said to be an act of communication based on not knowing how to speak in terms of words—which is confusion. It very much depends on the individuals. But at least there's hope in terms of sexual experience, as opposed to destroying other people.

Student: Have you heard the American expression "love-hate relationship"?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Very much so.

S: Well, apparently there are cases when somebody loves somebody very much and either he or she thinks it's not good or it's not socially acceptable or something—and this love can turn right away into hate, wanting to destroy. It might initially have been very truly a sincere sort of love, but then it turns into hatred and destruction.

TR: That is exactly the neurotic quality of love or desire, which contains aggression within itself. One aspect of that is a kind of ultimate frustration, that you can't express communication. And because you can't communicate, you decide you would rather destroy it. That kind of ultimate frustration.

S: Can you turn all of that into compassion, all those aggressive feelings, perhaps, or desires?

TR: It is not a question of whether you can do it or not, but seeing that situations would happen that way—which needs the tremendous generosity of stepping out of centralized ego and its demands. It seems possible.

Student: Is crying over somebody that you love and can't see, can't be with, a part of this aggression that you are talking about? If you love somebody and you miss them, and you begin to cry, is that aggression?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends. But there is that desperate quality: you are desperate and hungry. That quality of desperation is a form of aggression.

S: Is that a part of confusion, too?

TR: It could be said.

S: So what do you do to not have this anymore? You want to stop it, you don't want it to go on, you are in pain and suffering—but what do you do to stop it?

TR: You don't stop the process, you can't do it. That would be like trying to stop a bullet going on its way: once it is fired, you can't stop the result or fruition of it; you can prevent it only by not firing the bullet. In other words, we are trying to see the creator of all of this, which is the self-indulgency of ego, and to work with that.

S: When I get rid of my ego, will that make a difference?

TR: You don't get rid of your ego at all.

S: But if I don't get rid of my ego I can't be enlightened, is that right?

TR: It's not as simple as that. Without ego you cannot attain enlightenment, so you have to make friends with ego.

Student: How about aggression which is not directed, nondirected aggression? I mean something like extra energy which is not directed to a situation or to a person or to yourself, but is just there.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You can't have an ultimate nondirected hatred.

S: But there is a kind of aggression which is not hatred, it is just a kind of exuberance.

TR: Yes, I know what you mean.

S: It's inside and you have to get it out, but it's not hatred.

TR: Yes. It's like a lamp giving out light: the light is not directed to one particular spot, but at the same time there is a lamp and there is a burning flame, and without the flame there wouldn't be light. So it's a

question of dealing with the flame. But any kind of aggression or speed, whether it is directed at a particular situation or whether it is abstract, is the same thing: it could develop into anger or hatred. You see, basically aggression is not allowing things to go on as they are but trying to force the issue, like growing vegetables with chemicals.

Student: Rinpoche, could you give me sort of a structural approach to fear and explain where the intervals or gaps could be seen? For me, fear seems to be the root of almost everything. All of the things we're talking about seem to come from some sort of a fear syndrome. I've been confused, I haven't followed, it's muddled. The only thing I've gotten out of this was that fear seems to be the feeder to all of this, and if I could see the structure clearly and where the gaps were, then maybe I could connect to all the other branches of the whole tree.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is the intensity of the threat, that possible threat to the survival of the ego: the structure and natural patterns of fear start there. But we don't actually see the threatening quality ourselves; we only perceive the overwhelming quality of that threat, which is the fear coming back to us, bouncing back on us. It is like an echo: you don't know how loud you shouted, but you get overwhelmed by the echo coming back on you. The intensity of the echo is the result of your voice.

S: So the outward manifestation of the experience is the gap to look at, then?

TR: Yes, exactly.

S: If you can catch that as it's happening, you can almost be *with* that thing, right?

TR: Exactly.

S: Aha!

TR: That's a good one.

Student: Could you talk about how the projection process works, I mean the whole mirror idea? Who's watching whom?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a good question. To put it very simply, you watch the mirror, and your reflection of yourself watches you back.

S: So then there's no one watching you but yourself?

TR: Precisely.

S: We're back to the watcher again.

TR: Yes.

Student: Bardo experience would seem to be something that you go along with and let happen. It seems as if the watcher is something to get out of.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The watcher is the self-consciousness. All six bardo experiences are connected with the watcher, with the peak experience of watching yourself and the possibility of losing your grip, the watcher's grip—which is freedom, the awake state. That ambiguity as to whether you will be able to maintain your watchfulness or whether you are going to lose your watchfulness builds into a peak experience.

Student: How is it possible to make friends with the ego without going astray through indulgence in ego trips?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Generally ego is not aware of itself. But in this case you begin to be aware of ego as it is: you don't try to destroy it, or to exorcise it, but you see it as a step. Each crisis of ego is a step toward understanding, to the awake state. In other words, there are two aspects: ego purely continuing on its own, as it would like to play its game; and ego being seen in its true nature, in which case the game of ego becomes ironical. At the same time, you don't try to reject it. The game in itself becomes a step, a path.

S: What do you do? You want to get rid of your ego, but you don't reject it. I don't understand.

TR: You don't want to get rid of ego. That's the whole point. You don't try to get rid of ego at all—but you don't try to maintain ego either.

S: Is that where a sense of humor comes in?

TR: Yes.

Student: How do you deal constructively with aggression directed against your own person from another person?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose it's a question of not providing a target, an expected target. When another person begins to hit you, he automatically expects you'll be there to be hit. If you are not there to be hit, then he is waving his fist in the air, and there's the possibility that he might fall back. It's judo.

S: So much aggression is of a spiritual cruelty type, and not providing a target is very difficult under these conditions. Somehow your own space is being invaded by the aggressor. You have to occupy a space, and so your theory doesn't really solve it because you're still there.

TR: Well, if they begin to invade you, you could welcome them. By welcoming them, you are invading *their* territory.

Student: If I were to ask the question, "Who am I?," would an appropriate answer—I mean a realistic type of answer—be, "I am that which goes with the situation as it presents itself"?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you ask, "Who am I?"—if you don't regard it as a question but as a statement, then that question *is* the answer.

Student: I'm still trying to clarify something about this question of the observer, because I think that where the confusion arises in me is the value I place on it. In other words, if I'm really going with the situation as it presents itself, maybe there is an observer there and maybe there isn't, but it's as if the whole value I place on it is absent.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, the whole point is that as soon as you try to get something out of something, there is the possibility that because you want, you may not get anything in return. For instance, if you want to learn, if you want to know, there's something poverty-stricken about that, it is a sort of hunger, ultimately. And the more you demand, the less you're going to get. But if one has the attitude of richness, if you ask questions not out of poverty but out of richness—with that mentality, the question just happens as a statement rather than as a question. Then the answer happens as a natural process.

Student: Is there a constructive aspect to aggression?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Definitely, it is the energy. It is like the techniques we use in meditation. All sorts of different techniques and all sorts of inspirations that we use could be said to be aggression, but aggression without an owner. It is not domesticated aggression; it's wild aggression, independent aggression. It floats in the air as electricity—tremendous, powerful, active, and penetrating—which is beautiful.

Student: Somebody asked a question about how to transmute sexual energy and you didn't answer the question.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose it's a question of how you view the actual sexual energy. It may be seen as a kind of communication, an act of generosity without any demand. But once you begin to make demands, you are solidifying the space of communication. In that case, the other

person is not able to communicate with you at all; whereas if there is openness, exchange takes place freely as it is, in the open sense of generosity. That is what is called the dance.

S: But what if you can't express it, if it's not possible for social reasons or for other reasons?

TR: Well, you learn from that, I suppose. You can't change the whole situation because you want it. There's no magic in this sense. If you are thirsty in the middle of the desert, you can't just miraculously create water. That is impossible. The only thing to do is to work with it and learn from it—and in the future, next time, probably you will have a very profound idea of what thirst is. It has a tremendous impact on you.

Student: I get from all this that you should be rich and not hungry. But I'm rich and hungry at the same time. How am I going to jump over the hurdle of feeling rich and hungry at the same time? How will I be able to jump over and just be rich and forget about my hunger?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You don't forget your hunger, your poverty, when you're rich; otherwise there would be no richness at all, there would be no criterion for richness anymore. Rich is in comparison to poor.

S: I don't understand.

TR: If you are rich, how rich you are is dependent on how poor you are not, isn't it? So you work along with that.

Student: Is there a relationship between passion and compassion? What is the relationship?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The relationship is this: compassion contains wisdom and intelligence and is awake, beyond neurosis; passion contains neurosis, sleep, and dullness. It is exactly the same thing we've been talking about in terms of the transmutation of sexual energy.

S: What if they are both there at the same time?

TR: Then it's like the bardo experience of reaching the peak point in which you are uncertain whether you are bound by passion or whether you are about to awake into compassion. And the only thing to do is to communicate with those experiences. You do not particularly try to off-balance passion into compassion or compassion into passion, but if you are properly communicative and able to perceive the situation as it is, then neither compassion not passion exists. It is free, open space.

S: Then you are awake?

TR: When we talk about there being two things at the same time, we are talking about polarities. And if you don't have any criteria for or against anymore, then that is ultimate awake or, you could say, ultimate compassion.

Student: In this talk of sexual energy, how does the state of orgasm relate to sleep or awake, passion or compassion?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends on the background. It could be both—it's the same as any kind of physical contact, which could either be ultimate possessiveness coming through or ultimate openness, which is awakening.

S: Well, there is a difference right there between passion and compassion: one desires possession and the other just gives of itself and is satisfied in the act.

TR: If you see them as independent things, there is a difference, whereas, if you see them as polarities, there isn't.

Student: Can aggression be used as skillful means, the way Marpa did with Milarepa?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That happens all the time, sure. That kind of aggression is very accurate aggression. For instance, with Marpa's aggression, he never missed an opportunity or a chance. It is very accurate, very efficient. Such aggression contains wisdom, as compassion contains wisdom. It is awake aggression, always applicable.

Student: It sounds as if passion is something bad, something to be avoided, and that we should be compassionate. There seem to be *shoulds*.

Trungpa Rinpoche: On the other hand, unskillful compassion could be said to be passion as well. It is a different way of using words.

Student: What about refraining from passion or anger or any of the emotions? Does that lead to a greater awake state, or is that just another trick of ego and of the watcher?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I wouldn't call it a trick. You see, *refraining* is a very vague term. It is a question of whether you refrain from the actual act or whether you fundamentally work with it. Refraining is suppression—but putting something into practice could also be suppression, or an escape. The ultimate meaning of refraining is not sowing any seeds.

NINE

The Lonely Journey

SINCE THIS PARTICULAR SESSION is going to be the last one, I think we should try to develop further perspective, or view, as to what we have discussed and its application to everyday life. Of course, everyone must go through different phases of so-called normality and so-called abnormality, such as tension, depression, happiness, and spirituality. All these phases that we go through constantly seem to be what we have been talking about in this seminar. Unless we are able to apply this to everyday life, there is no point to it. Often, before we begin to apply it to anything, certain reminders come up to show us whether we are going too fast or going too slow. I'm not talking in terms of divine power or psychic phenomena of any kind, but the kitchen-sink level—conflicts of the bedroom and conflicts of the sink. Such situations are always present, but on the other hand we are left completely alone—without help, without a sympathizer, without a comforter.

It is important to see that this journey is a lonely journey. We are alone, completely alone, by ourselves. Nobody is really, fundamentally, going to comfort us at all. For that matter, nobody is really going to show us the path. There are a lot of big deals. People make a big deal about transmission or sudden enlightenment—but even that is interdependent. Transmission is a meeting of two minds: you come halfway, the teacher comes halfway, and you meet. It is very much dependent on personal effort. So any kind of savior notion is not going to function one hundred percent at all. Transmission has to be interdependent because we are trying to relate with something. As soon as we decide to relate

with anything, there has to be judgment, relative criteria: how we are going to relate, how open we are, how much ground we are allowing to relate to the space. That is always apparent, it always happens that way.

In the same way, as we relate more, external situations come to us. We begin to learn; we begin to receive the instructions of the situation as it is. But we can't re-create such situations at all. Situations come up and vanish of their own accord, and we have to work along with them by not grasping, by not being fascinated by them. That doesn't mean that we have to be frigid, or rigid for that matter, and fail to communicate with situations. It seems that the whole thing is extremely simple. Therefore, it is too complicated to get into it by using the language of the mind of complications, the logic of that and this, this and that, "On the other hand, let's look at it that way," and so on. The reason we are suffering is that we are so involved with strategy or planning rather than actually putting this into practice as it is.

This whole series of situations, the six types of bardo experience, is present all the time. There is the domestic problem of the hungry ghosts, in terms of comfort, luxury, hunger, and thirst. There is the competitive problem of the jealous gods, the asura level. There is the spiritual problem of the world of the gods. There is the problem of communication and relationship, which is the world of hell, or naraka. There is the problem of not opening, or the animal realm. There is the problem of being sucked into situations and grasping, which is the human realm. These realms are not other lands, not situations *outside*. They are within us: we have domestic problems, emotional problems, spiritual problems, relationship problems. All of these are very apparent; they are right here. And each of these problems has its exit or highlight. In each there is the possibility of completely flipping out or of stepping out of the confusion. Each situation presents its highlight of this and that.

Once we go further and get more and more into the situation as it is, then we wonder whether we are going too far or going too slow. But at the same time, we are in this particular vehicle without any reverse, not even a lower gear. We are traveling in top gear, at top speed—with no brakes either. It is an ongoing process. In the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, there is that same kind of analogy: you are going on and on and on; once you begin to destroy the computer's brainwork, you are involved in an ongoing process, an infinite journey into space. It's quite an interesting analogy.

This seminar seems to be based on seeing the situation of sanity and insanity. It has to do not only with working with ourselves but working with other people. In the present situation, some people are actually flipping out and some give the pretense of flipping out. That makes it possible to look into this topic. Strangely enough, the situation gave the talks, the situation held discussions, rather than there being deliberately guided talks in terms of myself or yourselves. It seems that talks just happen, as the mutual effort of the audience and the speaker. However we would like to regard it, it is a mutual effort, the act of the meeting of two minds.

There was a question a few days ago about alcohol. That is a very interesting subject. It seems that such a question has different perspectives or views. There is the conventional attitude—that of the nonsmoker, nondrinker, good citizen, good Christian, good Buddhist, good Hindu, good Jew. But there is another aspect as well, not associated with such conventional attitudes, but with the human situation, which also includes the experience of grass, hashish, LSD, mescaline, and all the rest of it. It seems that the whole question is based on sanity, and on the many possible ways of providing temptations leading us to insanity. That seems to be the central question or theme. It is very much based on the user—but at the same time there is a big conflict, as we know, between a dream world and the actual world, the so-to-speak actual world. The dream world is associated with hallucinations, pictures, and visions—but it is still intoxication. At the same time, in the earthly world, or the physical world, there is so much sudden pain and sudden pleasure, making too big a deal about reality. Here too there is the question of intoxication. Alcohol intoxication, or intoxication by yeast, is closer to the earth; but at the same time, as far as one's personal experience is concerned, it should be worked with very carefully. Such a high on earth could lead to being high on space, or it could just remain high on earth—that's the criterion.

That same criterion could apply also to the situation as a whole: what we've been talking about and doing in this particular seminar, and in general what I'm trying to do in this country. In fact, I think everybody here without exception is involved in a very dangerous game. Everybody here is involved in a very dangerous game because we are working on the karmic pattern of America. We are trying not only to fight it, but we are trying to infiltrate it. That is quite dangerous. The magical powers of

materialism and spirituality are waging war, so to speak, all the time. From the beginning of such a setup, it has worked out that way. Spirituality is against worldliness and worldliness is against spirituality. So we are facing tremendous danger. Every individual who takes part in this seminar is subject to an attack from materialism, because we are working on the infiltration of the materialistic world. According to history, a lot of people who attempted to become teachers or outstanding students were struck by such power, such energy—either through a direct physical attack or through a psychological attack. That has been happening. So it is very dangerous—to the extent that we should not be involved. If you insist on being involved in it, working with it, then you should be brave enough to work with it and go along with the infiltration.

That brings up the next subject, which is the practice of meditation. Meditation is the technique of infiltration, or the transmutation of negative hostile forces into positive creative situations. That is what we are doing. In other words, what I am trying to say is that involvement of this type is not going to be easy by any means. It is going to be extremely difficult. For one thing, it is a lonely journey. For another thing, it is a lonely journey with bridges, ladders, cliffs, and waves. It includes turbulent rivers that we have to cross, shaky bridges that we have to walk on, slippery steps that we have to tread on amongst hailstorms, rains, snowstorms, and powerful winds. Constant patience is needed as well: we are going to cross an inexhaustible stretch of desert without water. All of this is very frightening. And you cannot blame that situation on anyone: you can't blame it on the teacher who led you to it, and you can't blame it on yourself, that you started on it. Blaming doesn't help. Going along on the path is the only way to do it.

At the same time, some energy and encouragement continue on the path as well—it's not as black as that by any means. The first inspiration is that you decide to step in or involve yourself in such a path, which is based on our communication and our connection. Take the example of our local situation, for instance. If you are involved with the work of Suzuki Roshi in California, and if you also decide to become involved with the work which is happening here with me, such a situation contains tremendous power, reinforcement, and energy behind it. It is not only that the teachers themselves are particularly forceful teachers or powerful as individuals, because they are human beings. But the energy behind that inspiration comes from a lineage of two thousand five hun-

dred years of effort, energy, and spiritual power. Nobody in that lineage just took advantage of that power, but they received inspiration from it, and everybody worked, practiced, and achieved. And their inspiration has been handed down generation by generation. As the scriptures would say, it is like good gold, which is put on the fire and beaten, hammered, twisted, refined, until it comes out as pure gold—living pure gold. Or it is like hot baked bread. The knowledge of baking bread has been handed down generation by generation, so present-day bakers who belong to that particular lineage can still provide hot, living, tasty bread straight from the oven and feed you. Such a living quality of inspiration continues. It is that which keeps us continuing on the path, going through the deserts, going through the storms, bridges, ladders, and so on.

The whole thing is really based on whether we are going to acknowledge it in terms of our relationship to ourselves. Nobody particularly has to belong to a syndicate, or to a spiritual scene, just for the sake of belonging. It is the relationship of ourself to ourself which seems to be important. And the inspiration of belonging to ourself, working with ourself, relating with ourself, has different facets, which are the six types of world—the world of the gods, the world of hell, the world of the hungry ghosts, human beings, animals, and jealous gods. Making friends with ourselves is not very easy. It is a very profound thing. At the same time, we could do it, we could make it. Nevertheless, making a long story too short, involvement with ourselves means making an honest relationship with ourselves, looking into ourselves as what we are and realizing that external comfort will be temporary, that our comforters may not be there all the time. There is the possibility of us being alone. Therefore there is more reason to work and go along with the practices that are involved.

And usually what happens—and also what happened to me, "on my way to the theater"—is that I established a relationship with my guru, Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche, and learned from him, spent some time with him. There were also certain times when I couldn't see him and I couldn't talk to him. Later I would be able to talk to him again and relate my experiences to him. When I saw him for the last time, I felt I really made communication, with real commitment and understanding of his teachings. I was very pleased about it. I regarded that as the beginning of our relationship. But then I had to go back without him. I had achieved tremendous insight, understanding, as to what he was and what he had

to say and I was dying to relate that to him, just to tell him. That would be so beautiful. It would be such a beautiful moment to relate to him that at last I had heard him, I had understood him. I was waiting for the occasion to do that—and it never took place; nothing happened. Jamgön Kongtrül was captured by the Communist Chinese and he died in jail. I never met him or saw him again.

A similar situation happened in terms of Gampopa and Milarepa. Milarepa told Gampopa that he should practice certain meditations and relate with his experience—and he did it, he achieved it. But it happened that he forgot the particular date he was supposed to come and see Milarepa, which was the fifteenth day of the first month of the year, according to the Tibetan calendar. He was about fifteen days late. He suddenly remembered on the twenty-fifth day that he must go and see Milarepa on the fifteenth, so he decided to set out. He rushed, but halfway there some travelers came to him with the message that Milarepa was dead. He had sent a piece of his robe and a message for Gampopa. So Gampopa was never able to relate that last experience to Milarepa.

Situations like that take place all the time. They are a kind of encouragement, showing us that we are able to work with ourselves and that we will achieve the goal—but we will not receive the congratulations of the guru anymore. Again you are alone: you are a lonely student or you are a lonely teacher. You are continuously becoming alone again. With such independence, relating with spiritual scenes or other such situations is not so important. But relating with ourselves is very important and more necessary. There is a really living quality in that.

I'm not saying these things because I want to raise your paranoia, but as in the historical cases or evolutionary cases that took place, nobody is going to congratulate you, that finally you are buddha. And in fact, your enthronement ceremony will never take place. If it did take place, it would be dangerous, the wrong time—it would not be real anymore. So the lonely journey is important. And particularly, many of you who took part in this seminar and experienced our individual relationship are going to go back to your own places and try to practice by yourselves and work hard on all this, trying to relate with the different realms of the world. But at the same time, no teacher or situation should be providing comfort to anybody. I suppose that is the point we are getting at. In other words, nobody is going to be initiated as a fully enlightened person decorated by the guru. It is just about to happen, you think you are just

about to get a decoration—but it doesn't take place; it never happens. So any external reliance does not work. It is the individual, personal intuition, working on oneself, which is important.

Student: Rinpoche, the path that you're talking about is not very complex. It is very simple, just the way it is right now, without any trips. Isn't that it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, I think it is simple and immediate. We are talking about not only what we should do when we finish our meeting here, but what we should be doing right now—let alone when we retire and buy a house and land somewhere and *then* meditate. It happens right now.

Student: You have said that in tantra there is a colorful aspect, beyond shunyata. Do you mean real colors, physical colors, vision, eyesight? Sometimes you don't see at all; you look but you just don't see. At other times you can see every little thing.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Generally, we are preoccupied all the time. When that wall of preoccupation is removed, for the first time we begin to appreciate colors: visual situations, which could become the inspiration for symbolism, as well as psychological and emotional colors. But that doesn't mean you are going to see beehive mandalas, or that your bright carpet is going to turn into herukas.

Student: Could you speak more clearly about infiltration and other tactics?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it involves a certain kind of acceptance at the beginning, so that you could enter into a situation. Having entered into a situation, then you could work with the heart of that situation. I don't see using any other tactic apart from infiltration. The other tactic would have to be an attack, an external attack or invasion—which is like trying to throw out the whole wall by force. In that case, there is the possibility that you might get hurt; whereas if you decide to work brick by brick, you will never get hurt, but you will be able to destroy the whole wall. Infiltration begins by working on the sensitive areas which are not guarded by the meshwork of materialistic forces. It is like trying to infiltrate at the time when the changing of the guards is taking place:

at that point you have a chance to go in. It is trying to see the gaps, the unguarded situations where you can infiltrate through.

S: So it is not only a matter of demolition, as it were, but a transformation of the situation you find yourself in?

TR: Yes, yes, this is so. Another analogy has been used in Chinese philosophy, as well as by Mao Tse-tung. He said that if you are trying to invade a country, you don't attack the capital to start with. Instead, you first try to work your way into the countryside, make friends with the peasants, and occupy the rural areas. Then finally the capital becomes just a little island, an insignificant thing.

Student: Isn't infiltration a dangerous idea? Doesn't it imply that we have the concept that we have something that's better than what is, so we're going to change it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That depends on your understanding. Take the example of the local situation. In order to teach meditation or nonviolence to America, first you have to become a complete American, you have to become a super-American. Then you'll be able to speak their language as well as what you're trying to say. So a certain giving is necessary as well as attacking or changing, because change cannot take place if you don't know what you're going to change. In that sense, I don't think it is going to be dangerous.

S: It just seems like it would be dangerous to develop into some kind of crusader.

TR: Of course. It would be dangerous in that case—if you became evangelistic, carried away, with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other.

Student: Isn't there a conflict in becoming American? On the one hand, as students of meditation we lean toward a kind of pure life. For instance, maybe we'll want to get up early in the morning, or maybe we'll want to eat a simple diet. On the other hand, Americans watch TV and they go window-shopping and do other sorts of things. Isn't there a danger in leading the pure life, and isn't there also a danger in watching too much TV?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, that's precisely the point I'm trying to raise. I'm glad you raised that question. If you lead a complete American middle-class life—watch television, football, go into business—then

you begin to see the foolishness of that; and if you live in a simple place and are trying to do the hippie trip, equally there is something lacking there as well. The point is to see both perspective views as they are and then to penetrate through it. At the same time, you don't get hurt by watching television, going to parties, and having polite conversation with people. That doesn't overwhelm you, because you already know what is happening; whereas generally you don't know what's happening, you just go along.

Student: Would you say that practicing meditation would be like the bridge or ladder joining together the bottom and the top?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Meditation practice is like getting into no-man's-land. It is the act of doing absolutely nothing, which provides the right perspective, or view, of the ultimate meditation experience. Because of such understanding, the postmeditation experience also becomes broader and more open, because you have that vision. It is working with duality in some sense, the two extremes. Both extremes are being seen as they are by going into it.

Student: While you're still around, can I maybe buy you a beer?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Go ahead.

Student: Rinpoche, I really didn't understand what you said about alcohol, when you compared getting high off earth and getting high off space. Can you be clearer about that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There are actual deliberate differences between being high on drugs and high on alcohol. Being high on drugs is very much a dream world—that is why a lot of people find it difficult to reconcile themselves when they come out of it. You might get a hangover from alcohol, of course, but alcohol intoxication is being high on earth: people cry, people fight, such earthy situations happen. It is based directly on living. But what I'm trying to say is that any kind of extreme or any attempt at replacement or escape doesn't seem to be right.

S: So there could be danger in getting high on alcohol as well?

TR: Yes. It might lead to being high on space.

S: That's what I didn't follow before. How would being high on earth be any different from being high on space?

TR: Because all sorts of concepts begin to develop. Being high on earth could lead to being high on space at the same time—based on such conceptualizing. But that doesn't mean one should always be guarded and keeping a happy medium. Everybody says, "Moderation in everything," which is a well-known phrase, jargon. But somehow that doesn't work either. It should be experiential, personal.

Student: Rinpoche, how does the idea of its being a lonely journey relate to the possibility of going into it with your family, making the journey as more than one?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There will be hundreds of people making the same journey. It doesn't have to be purely your family. Hundreds of people here in this gathering are making a similar journey. At the same time, the whole idea is that you cannot actually relate one hundred percent of your own experiences to anybody; you cannot relate everything to anybody completely. The ways we have of relating are words and situations, and words and situations are very inadequate, clumsy ways of communicating. Ultimately there's only one way—being alone. You might take your family and friends along into the same situations, but that doesn't mean you are sharing absolutely every moment of those situations with them. So in any case there is no alternative.

Student: Do you have any comments on such activities as painting, writing, music, and theater—those kinds of things?

Trungpa Rinpoche: They are the expression of man's inspiration, including landing on the moon—which is beautiful. It is the result of being brave enough to experiment, brave enough to go along with the truth of nature as it is, and accomplishing it. That's the dignity of man, or whatever jargon we'd like to use. It's beautiful. You see, the point is that once you begin to put these—painting, music, scientific experiments, whatever it may be—into practice, at the beginning it is deliberate effort but in the end you transcend deliberateness. Your work becomes a masterpiece. An accomplished artist wouldn't think of how his audience is going to be impressed; he just does it. It is the same thing with scientific experiments: a master scientist wouldn't hesitate; he or she is continuously going more and more into the depths of reality, of things as they are.

Student: A moment ago when we were talking about infiltrating America, someone said, "I do this, but Americans watch TV," as though

Americans were somebody else. I think if we have any ideas about doing something for America, we have to remember, like it or not, that America is us. In a sense we don't have to infiltrate America—we're already in it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's true, yes. Infiltrating is already taking place and actually taking effect. Good for you.

S: Is that infiltration at the political or sociological level, or can it take place within each individual, infiltrating one's square side and one's hippie side—becoming friends with those and realizing the foolishness of both extremes?

TR: It works both ways. Usually the reason we are here is because we want to learn something. We ask questions all the time at the beginning. Then we begin to realize that infiltration is taking place already. That is a kind of acknowledgment, a confirmation that it has happened already, rather than that we have to work on a tactic of any kind.

Infiltration works inwardly as well as outwardly. It is the same analogy as how to stop the war. War is aggression, an act of aggression; so the only way to stop the war is not to make a nuisance of ourselves to ourselves. We start by dealing with the closest aggression that there is; that is the starting point of trying to stop the war. I know that most idealistic peace marchers and nonviolence groups, who are involved with actual problems, wouldn't agree with that—it would seem to be too timid and cowardly. Because of that, they begin to create another kind of war. In fact, people actually believe that if they start one kind of aggression in order to stop another aggression, that is absolutely justifiable aggression. But as far as aggression goes, there is no justifiable aggression at all. By fighting aggression with aggression, you're adding to the complications and confusions of both the country and the individuals.

Student: In a previous talk you mentioned the concept of sane violence and insane violence. Is that sane violence related at all to the so-called aggressiveness of the peace marchers? What is the difference between sane violence and what the peace marchers are doing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that what they are doing is insane violence, the confusion of violence. They are not able to learn judo; instead they take part in an ordinary fistfight game, based on not having enough understanding of the nature of violence. I mean, one obvious way of defeating somebody is to kick back. But then there is a continual chain

reaction set up—which I would say is insane, because the whole thing is based on defeat and victory constantly. Actual sane violence transcends both defeat and victory at the same time. It is like the analogy of the Buddha being attacked by the maras: each spearhead or arrow thrown at him became a flower.

S: I think that for me the peace marches were one of the first steps I made in looking at my society. I suppose that has a lot to do with me being here now.

TR: It serves a purpose, of course. Anything you will do serves a purpose. If you commit suicide, that will make someone stop and think, but that doesn't necessarily mean that that is the way, the only way. What we are talking about is that we actually don't want to hurt others. Once you begin to do something, there is going to be a natural chain reaction: your love or hate is going to reach somebody else and they're going to be subject to that as well as you.

S: Do you think they actually hurt others then, the marchers?

TR: Well, they built up all sorts of animosity.

Student: They seem to be very self-righteous.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's the whole point. You develop a philosophy of your own at the beginning, which may be good, based on Mahatma Gandhi's idea of nonviolence and so on. But then you have to hold on to that: you have regular prefabricated answers to every question, and you don't think for yourself at all. You just churn them out because it is already worked out, it is already planned. That's the problem with any kind of dogma: that prefabricated quality becomes lifeless, without any personality.

Student: In talking about the path of the bodhisattva, you say you destroy what needs to be destroyed. What do you mean by this?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is the precise, clear vision of compassion that sees the situation clearly, obviously, as it is. Whenever you have to play the role of tough, you play it. Whenever you need to play the role of gentleness, you do it. You see, there is a tremendous difference between blind compassion and skillful compassion.

Student: Why are you here rather than in a cave?

Trungpa Rinpoche: This is a cave. In fact, twenty-four hours a day I work in a cave.

Student: Will you speak about the family and its importance on the path?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, each relationship is energy. The concept of sangha, for instance, means a group of people working together as brothers and sisters, working together as spiritual friends to one another. That is an important point. In order to be brothers and sisters, you have to be open to each other as well. Being open is not being dependent on others, which blocks *their* openness. In other words, the sangha does not create a situation of claustrophobia for each person in it. If somebody falls, you still stand independently; because you are not leaning on the other person, you don't fall. When one person falls it doesn't create a chain reaction of other people falling as well. So independence is equally important as being together, acting as an inspiration to one another.

S: Should you let people pick themselves up if they fall? It seems if you try to help, sometimes that can be a reflection of your own ego. I think that for myself, it is better for me to pick myself up. If somebody tries to help, unless it's done just right, it's wrong.

TR: The important point there is exactly parallel to what we were saying about the changing of the guards being a chance to infiltrate. Such things could also take place in reverse. If you try to help somebody, when you are leaning down to help, somebody could easily kick both of you equally. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't help others, that you just purely want to survive. You should be working with situations. But there is a danger of something else coming in and knocking both of you down. It's the notion of the blind leading the blind.

Student: You use the words *hope* and *fear* in the same way, meaning that they both need to be transcended, as though hope is as much of an obstruction as fear. I was wondering how that fits in with your schemes for the community here. It seems to be a very hopeful thing. You use the word *inspiration,* but it seems to be the same thing.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems to depend on your relationship to that concept. If inspiration is hope, then fear is not a part of it. But the inspiration I was trying to express contains both hope and fear—in other words, both destruction and creation. Destruction is as creative an inspiration as creation. Both are inspiration.

S: Does that mean you have to be willing to give up all plans of any type?

TR: I wouldn't give up plans, but I wouldn't relate plans with the future alone—I would relate plans with the present moment. The potential of the future is in the present moment rather than purely in the future. We work in the present—with the future potential of possibilities in the present. So it is relating with the present moment, as your relation with yourself and as your stepping-stone.

Student: Could you mention some positive aspects of ego that would allow us to make friends with it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is what we have been saying, that inspiration includes both hope and fear. Any negative aspect of ego which presents itself then becomes material to work on. In that sense ego *is* the inspiration. Without ego, there wouldn't be realization at all, from our point of view.

Student: I was thinking about what you said about your relationship with your teacher, and the story of Gampopa and Milarepa, and the fact that there's no gratification. And it seems as if I'm the one who wants to get enlightened—I mean me, Steve. Steve wants to get enlightened, but it also seems as if Steve is never going to get enlightened because he won't be there when he's enlightened; there's no gratification in being enlightened. So why do I want to get enlightened so bad?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, that's the whole point—attaining enlightenment doesn't mean gratification, does it?

S: But what is it that makes us want to get enlightened? I mean, it seems everything I do is for gratification, and I want to get enlightened for no less reason—but there must be another reason.

TR: Sure. There is pain and pleasure, and you want to have a proper relationship with them.

S: I identify enlightenment with pleasure, I suppose, because I'm either looking for pleasure or looking for enlightenment.

TR: I think that's the problem, in fact. Enlightenment has nothing to do with pleasure—or pain, for that matter. It just *is*.

S: If we're really aware of what we are and accept it, then is that the same as enlightenment?

TR: Enlightenment is, as we said, an honest relationship with our-

selves. That is why it is connected with the truth—*being* true rather than truth as something external you are relating to. Just being.

Student: It seems ego is really clever. First we tell him we'll make friends with him, come along, help out—and at the last minute we throw him overboard. And he's really smart about it. He says, "Why should I be friends with you? You're trying to suck me into something. What's in it for me?" What's the tag line?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Why not?

S: Just go along for the hell of it?

TR: Quite.

Part Two

THE SIX STATES OF BEING

Karmê Chöling, 1971

ONE

Pain and Pleasure

GENERALLY THE CONCEPT of bardo is misunderstood to be purely the gap between one's death and next birth. But in this case, the idea of bardo is being presented as it was by Padmasambhava. The whole concept is based on the continuity of the bardo experience. So although some scholars and people claim that the idea of bardo, or of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as a whole, is purely related with the details of the hang-ups and hallucinations connected with the colorful world after death and how to relate to it, what we are working on in this case is not necessarily connected with that purely colorful world and its hang-ups. Instead, it is connected with the continuity of the psychosomatic situation. As long as there is a physical body involved with life, that automatically brings pain or pleasure. Pain and pleasure could be interpreted as illness or sickness or problems or neuroses of all kinds. They have psychosomatic case histories constantly.

The word *bardo* means "in-between state." *Bar* means "between," "in between," the medium situation which exists between one extreme and the other extreme. *Do* could be explained as being an island, a remote island which exists out of nowhere, yet is surrounded by an ocean, or desert, or whatever. So bardo is that which is outstanding like an island in terms of your life situation, that which is in between experiences. You could have experiences of extreme pleasure and extreme pain. When the experience of pleasure is extreme, automatically that experience of pleasure becomes irritatingly pleasureful. Bardo is that irritating and heavy-handed quality of pleasure just about to bring pain, invite pain. It is that

kind of uncertainty between two situations. For instance, hot and cold are uncertain: either it is too hot or too cold. If it is too hot, therefore it could be said to be too cold; but if it is too cold, therefore it is regarded as too hot. Such uncertainty and the psychophysical buildup associated with it brings an extreme case of uncertainty, and at that point, one begins to lose criteria of any kind.

The concept of bardo has six types. It seems to be quite worthwhile to relate these six bardos with the six realms of existence: the realm of the gods; the realm of jealous gods, or asuras; the realm of human beings; the realm of animals; the realm of hungry ghosts, or pretas; and the realm of hell. Those prescribed situations, or realms, seem to provide an extremely interesting way of looking at bardo. Each of these realms has some quality of extreme pleasure and extreme pain, and in between the two there is also a kind of extreme. But those extremes have entirely different textures in the various realms. For instance, there is the extreme hunger, rigidness, and stupidity of the animal realm; the extreme indulgence of the human realm; the extreme relativity of the jealous gods level. All kinds of realms take place, each with their bardo states. What we are going to discuss is largely the psychological state where there is pain as well as pleasure—physical pain, psychological pain, or spiritual pain; spiritual pleasure, psychological pleasure, or physical pleasure. All six realms are characterized by this continual process of striving, the continual process of trying to reach some kind of ultimate answer, to achieve permanent pleasure.

As far as this particular human society is concerned, the concept of bardo is extremely powerful and important to us. We have continual problems related with questions such as "What is sane and what is insane?" "What is the purpose of life?" Those are popular questions often asked of spiritual teachers when they are interviewed on the radio or television, or give personal interviews. Always, "What is the purpose of life?" What is the purpose of life?—what isn't the purpose of life, for that matter? These questions are not concerned with fixed answers as such, at all. But these questions could be answered in the psychophysical sense. What is not body? What is body? What is not mind? What is mind? What is emotion? What isn't emotion? How does emotion function? What is the texture of emotion that you can switch by being loving as well as by being aggressive? What makes these changes? How does the whole creation take place? Creation does not take place through the

revelation of God, and creation does not take place purely by trying to change your living situation. If you are irritated by yourself or your particular situation—for instance, living with your parents—moving out of your parents' domain and renting your own apartment somewhere else does not solve the problem at all, because you carry yourself with you all the time, as the tortoise carries his shell. So the question has not been answered, the problem has not been solved. There is something more fundamental than that. Pain and pleasure are not as gullible as we would like to think. They are very subtle and deep-rooted in our life, and take place constantly.

The bardo experience tells you the details of the texture or the color or the temperature of godlike mentality or hell-like mentality, whatever it may be. It tells you in great detail about these basic situations or realms, about things as they are in terms of panoramic vision. It seems that a lot of people experienced this in the past and achieved the perfection of it. They understood those situations—so much so that the message has been handed down from generation to generation. People have experienced it. So it seems that what we are involved with in this particular seminar is the tremendous opportunity to discuss the texture and, you could almost say, the case history of emotions. It is an opportunity for a different way of living and relating to our human existence—the inhuman quality of human existence as well as the human quality of human existence.

Bardo experience is an extremely powerful way of solving the problem of extremes. At the same time, it is not presenting for or against, but trying to present both extremes simultaneously. That provides a way to the bardo experience of clear light. Such experiences as chönyi bardo, which is based on absorption into basic space, creating enormous, overpowering expansion—how does that relate with such bardos as sipa bardo, the bardo of existence, continually creating new situations? That whole process of the six bardos seems to be very much related with our own psychological portrait. Somebody in this audience—or everybody in this audience, shall we say—has animal qualities, as well as hungry ghost qualities, as well as realm of gods qualities, as well as human qualities. We are all part of this gigantic network, or amalgamation, of all colors, all textures, all temperatures, all emotions—we are part of the whole thing. That is why we exist as what we are, why we function as what we are. Otherwise, we could not function in terms of samsara. We

have managed to maintain our confusion up to now very skillfully. Such an achievement! Why? Because we could become hell beings, because we could become realm of gods beings, because we could become part of the animal realm, because we could become hungry ghosts. We improvise constantly, very skillfully drawing out these possible alternatives.

That whole situation brings up the question of the survival of ego. In order to survive as a human being who is based on passion and aggression, in order to maintain those ideas of passion and aggression, we have to relate with all kinds of subsidiary ways of maintaining ourselves. We have all kinds of ways of doing that. We could present cold as completely frozen, icy cold, or just a chill. We could present cold which is just about to become hot, and then we could switch into hot: just chill-off hot, warm, body temperature warm, irritatingly hot warm. We could present all kinds of textures, all kinds of beings with all kinds of living situations. We are being trained in some strange way, immediately from the time we are born and presented until we are grown up, up to the point we become the emperor of the world. We constantly operate all those realms, improvising that as opposed to this, this as opposed to that.

So the bardo experience is the description of a skillful artist who managed to paint such a balanced picture, or a skillful musician who managed to play such beautiful music—but that music belongs to somebody, that picture belongs to somebody. That always seems to be the problem. That is what is called ego. But we cannot just forget the whole thing and try to present a beautiful and blissful heavenly situation which answers all the problems or shows the great promise of liberation. Before we know what liberation or enlightenment is, we also have to know what is not liberation, what is not enlightenment. Studying bardo seems to create a stepping-stone. That seems to be most important. We need to learn how to relate to our daily experience, how to relate with our own experiences rather than with doctrinal assumptions, philosophical views, scientific theories, or what have you. So bardo is a very practical way of looking at our life.

This particular talk seems to be more like an appetizer than the actual main course. But even the appetizer itself has the quality of the environment and of what meal is to come. So that also seems to be useful. If you just decide to have the appetizer, if you decide to walk out of the restaurant before you have the main course, that's possible. We could do so—or you could do so.

Student: What do you mean by spiritual pleasure and pain?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Spiritual pain is extremely powerful pain, because it transcends the ordinary pain of daily living; and spiritual pleasure is delightful, because it is regarded as transcendental pleasure, which supposedly transcends any human concerns. In either case, the whole idea is based on an inhuman attitude to spirituality, rather than the human aspect of spirituality.

S: It is still concerned with ego?

TR: If it is concerned with pain and pleasure at all, it is always concerned with the ego, I'm afraid.

S: So it is more in the realm of what you are wont to call spiritual materialism, Rinpoche?

TR: Precisely, yes. As long as we talk in terms of greater achievement, or greater liberation, in terms of "me" achieving greater liberation, "me" experiencing greater pleasure, then the whole thing is related with that relative view, which doesn't liberate at all. Therefore, if anything is concerned with that and this, relative situations, it is regarded as spiritual materialism because it has something to hang on to. You automatically try to destroy the handle, but at the same time, you provide another handle out of the absence of that handle.

Student: I don't understand the relation between bardo, or the concept of in-betweenness, and realm. When you say *chönyi bardo,* or the same of some other bardo, you're not referring to any of the realms, are you?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Not necessarily, because you could say that all aspects of bardo have the same quality.

S: Do you mean that all the realms are aspects of bardo?

TR: They are all bardos, in between, because you are trapped in something. The whole idea of bondage or entrapment is that you are not there, not here. You are captivated somewhere; therefore it is bardo.

Student: I had the opposite impression. I always had the impression that bardo referred to a gap.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, gap. When you are born in the realm of the gods, or when you are born in the animal realm, you manage to be born in a realm by misunderstanding the gap.

S: So is the bardo the time in between living in one realm and another, say between hell and the realm of animals?

TR: No, not necessarily. Bardo is the realms as they are. You want to achieve absolute pleasure. At the same time, you demand that absolute pleasure because you experience pain. As the pain gets worse and worse, the pleasure becomes more demanding. So finally, you are not quite certain whether you are experiencing pain or pleasure. Then you are born in the realm of the gods, because you are completely bewildered into pleasurehood, or whatever it's called, "godhood."

Student: You mentioned a bardo between death and birth. Is there a bardo between birth and death also?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, it is called sipa bardo.

S: So we are always in between.

TR: You have been born and you are just about to die, or you have died and you are just about to be born. You are relating with birth—or death for that matter.

Student: Is there a principle that creates the whole bardo experience and also the other experiences that we create?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It comes from our living situation, life.

S: So it is continuous, right? From birth to death, during that cycle?

TR: I think so, yes.

S: Is that sort of like ego being handed down?

TR: Yes.

S: Is that a subconsciousness being handed down?

TR: Well, it is always a hidden wish or hidden fear which is the source of involving ourselves in continual bardo experiences.

Student: Could you explain again what bardo is the gap between?

Trungpa Rinpoche: A gap between two extremes.

S: Then the bardo experience is not an experience of extremes?

TR: In a sense it is continual experience, which also presents a meeting of the two extremes. Later we will be going into the details of the different realms, such as the realm of the gods, the realm of animals, and the realm of hell. We constantly go through these realms. We have some kind of trip going on all the time. These trips are brought about by the

extreme meeting point of hope and fear. So we are constantly trapped in that product of our work, the product of our wish or desire.

Student: Rinpoche, is the confusion between pain and pleasure that you're talking about different from what Milarepa discusses as the nondistinction of pain and pleasure? He talks about recognizing the identical nature of the two extremes, not distinguishing between pain and pleasure.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That seems to be an intelligent effort; but in this case, it is completely mechanical: one is uncertain whether one is experiencing pain or pleasure, and one is swept away. Because you are uncertain about pain or pleasure, therefore you are pushed and thrust into new situations automatically. Otherwise, if you are on the side of pain or the side of pleasure as it is, you cannot get into the bardo state at all, because you are in a meditative state at that moment. You regard pain as pain, pleasure as pleasure. Whereas the way we get caught into the extreme of the bardo state is that we are not quite certain whether we are actually experiencing pain as pain or whether we are experiencing pain as occupation, which means pleasure in some sense. So we are caught up in it. That is why we manage to hang on here, in this samsaric world. It is a very beautiful tactic somebody developed.

S: What attitude should one have toward pleasure?

TR: It doesn't matter what attitude you have, it is what it is. Pleasure is pleasure, pain is pain. It does not matter about attitude. Attitude doesn't play a part, particularly. Obviously you would have some intelligence in relating with your experiences. But that could hardly be called an attitude, in fact. It is just instinct.

S: Rinpoche, how is the idea of the meditative state being the complete experience of pain as pain and pleasure as pleasure related to the statement I've heard that pain and pleasure are the same thing?

TR: If you experience pain as pain in the fullest sense, then it is what it is—as much as pleasure could be. That is intelligent. You are not confused or uncertain as to what is pain and what is pleasure, but you are seeing things precisely, directly as they are. In that way, pain and pleasure are one in the realm of intelligence, realm of prajna, realm of knowledge.

S: Rinpoche, does the opposite hold true, when you experience pleasure fully?

TR: It is saying the same thing. True pleasure is true experience as

much as true pain, for that matter. But that is not at all involved in a dream world; you are experiencing things really as they are.

Student: Would someone who didn't have a neurotic state of mind still be experiencing these different realms?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, in terms of display. You cannot exist without a world of some kind to exist in. But that doesn't mean you are confused between the two worlds.

S: Between which two worlds?

TR: Pain and pleasure. For instance, you are not confused about the pain of the hungry ghost realm or the pleasure of the hungry ghost realm. You just see the hungry ghost realm as what your world is, precisely and clearly.

Student: How do you see yourself in that? Do you separate yourself at all?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You do not separate yourself from it. You begin to see that you are part of that world entirely, fully, thoroughly. That is why you begin to see it, because if you see yourself as separate from it, then you fail to see it—you are too self-concerned, too self-conscious.

Student: The description of the neurotic state implies oscillation, whereas the description of pain as pain, pleasure as pleasure, indicates a fixed point. We also perceive through oscillation. Does that have any relation to all this?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Relating with the world is the key point. Relating with the world could be said to be the idea of complete involvement, seeing pain as pain and pleasure as pleasure; whereas whenever there is distance between you and the world, whenever there is failure to connect, or absent-mindedness, then automatically confusion begins to crop up, because you have failed to relate with things as they are. That brings bewilderment and confusion. You begin to lose track of it—which brings the bardo experience. Then that bardo experience goes to the extreme—it becomes an absolutely extreme and rising crescendo of confusion, big pain and big pleasure. You go up and up and up, because you have lost track. It is as if you have lost your anchor and you are floating in the ocean endlessly, constantly, because you have lost contact, lost any real way of relating with things as they are.

S: If you can hold the point where you see things as they are, what then causes the shift from one world to the next? How do you go from, say, the realm of the hungry ghosts to the realm of humans? What causes that jump?

TR: You cannot live in one world constantly. Whether you are involved with an aggressive or a pleasurable situation in your living world, it seems that the situation demands a change, not that you make a change. It is like traveling from one place to another. The place invites you to adapt to your situation there, rather than you trying to adopt a new situation by force.

Student: If you remain in the meditative state, do you eliminate the bardo experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Constantly. At the same time, you still have to relate with the living bardo potential from other people's points of view. So you can't reject it altogether. In other words, if you are in a meditative state constantly, you do not get into the bardo state as such, but you share the bardo experiences or environment of other people.

Student: What state are *you* in?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Any state.

S: If you don't get into the bardo state as such, if you share other people's bardo state, what state are you in?

TR: You are in *their* state. If you are in America, you are in America. You share the American experience with Americans.

Student: You said that when you begin searching for pleasure, pleasure and pain build up simultaneously, so you have this confusion. In what way does this happen? I'm not clear about that.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, partly the situation demands that process, and it is also partly the state of mind which brings it.

S: Why do you seek more and more pleasure? Is that innate? Do you just naturally seek more and more pleasure?

TR: You don't necessarily search for pleasure. If your whole world is based on pain, you just try to swim through that pain. Each stroke of your hand could be said to be directed toward pleasure, but you are not getting pleasure, you are just roaming about in that particular painful realm.

Student: Oh, so the problem is that you're seeking to be something that you are not, rather than accepting at that moment exactly what you are.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. Supposing you were starved, following the mentality of the hungry ghost realm, just swimming in this tremendous hunger. There is a possibility of satisfying your hunger, but that doesn't seem to be your aim or object at all. Instead you are just maintaining your own hunger as it is. You try to roam about constantly and as much as possible. You may swim faster and faster, or you may try to give up on swimming and float about, but in either case you are in it already. You have managed to raise a kind of excitement onto the surface, because you regard the whole situation of being in such hunger and thirst as your occupation. You begin to develop the limitless quality of this ocean of hunger; it is constant, everywhere. If you begin to see mountains or land beyond your ocean, probably you won't like it. Although you want to be saved, at the same time there is some irritation about that because then you would have to adapt to a new situation. You would need to get out of the ocean and climb up on the land and deal with the natives. You don't like that at all. You would rather float. But at the same time, you don't really want to drown in it. You would rather just exist in it, float about.

S: Why does one seek to maintain one's state of being?

TR: Because that is the comfortable situation at the time.

S: Do you mean someone can be in pain and really have a good time?

TR: Yes. That is what is meant by pain and pleasure happening simultaneously: the security of the pain becomes pleasure.

Student: Where is the motivation for compassion if everybody is having a good time? Why disturb them?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Why disturb them? Because fundamentally that is not a healthy place to be. I mean, you do not belong to the water, you belong to the land. That is the whole problem: if you want to help someone, that also is going to cause them pain, tremendous pain. That is precisely what it is. You don't want to be too kind, to save them from pain. You have to take that pain for granted. It is like an operation: in order to remove the sickness, you have to cut them, you have to take things out, the illness or growth or whatever.

S: As far as their own pleasure-pain situation is concerned, they are already happy.

TR: They are not really happy. They are not really happy, but they have accepted their involvement as an occupation.

Student: If you are not projecting any bardo and if you are with someone else who is likewise not projecting any particular bardo trip, is there any state which exists?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose you could say clear light.

S: That would be a true meeting of minds?

TR: Precisely, yes. That is where—what you call—transmission takes place.

S: What you call. [*Laughter*]

Student: You mentioned how we just float around, say in the hungry ghost world. When meditation enters in, what changes in that floating around?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What does meditation change, did you mean? At the beginning meditation could be regarded as an intrusion, as an extremely painful thing to do, because it takes you away from your habitual dwelling. All kinds of painful situations churn out because for the first time, you create another relative situation, other than your dwelling. Gradually you gain a new perspective, new ideas from the meditation experience, which show you another living situation other than your own. It is a way to broaden your mind. It seems to introduce another land that exists beyond your own realm. That is why we find sitting meditating practice very painful. Any kind of practice is quite painful, irritating.

Student: Some Tibetan book that I was reading, I forget which one, said, "Meditate until you hate it."

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you don't have to wait.

S: I don't have to meditate that long not to like it.

TR: In regard to meditation, if one begins to enjoy doing it, then there must be some kind of entertainment going on, which is quite fishy.

Student: It seems to me if you become really aware of pleasure as pleasure and pain as pain, it doesn't necessarily get you out of the search for pleasure. If you really experience both the pleasure and the pain,

doesn't that continually involve you in the search for pleasure, because it is preferable to pain?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think so. If you regard pleasure as an external entity which entertains you, you could perpetually swim in the pleasure because it is a foreign element, yet it is also intimate. Whereas if you begin to see pain as pain and pleasure as pleasure—as it is—then the whole game of intimacy, the relative situation or love affair, begins to wear out. Finally you begin to realize that it is your own creation. You automatically begin to see the transparent quality of the pain or the pleasure.

S: When you begin to see pain and pleasure for what they are, what determines when you panic?

TR: When you begin to lose the crew who entertain you. You begin to realize that the last of the entertainment crew is walking out of your sight—and you end up just by yourself.

Student: Buddhism seems to put a great value on pain, and you said good meditation is painful. How come? What's wrong with good meditation being investigating the nature of pleasure? There seems to be a great value in negativity, which seems to be true—but why not a great value in positivity?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think it is particularly that a value is placed on pain at all. The basic idea is letting things go as they are. It is just open space, an entirely new dimension in your meditative state, letting whatever is there come through. If it is a pleasurable situation, you also let that come through. In a description of Milarepa meditating in a cave, he had a tremendously pleasurable experience of the joy of inner heat coming through. For several days he found that particular experience extremely pleasurable. But that worked through and was gone thoroughly. It sort of wore out. Next, continually irritating situations came through as well. So it is a question of opening your whole being and letting whatever comes through come through. This particular discussion of pleasure and pain in meditation seems to be based on counteracting the current simple-minded attitude toward meditation, which is that it is supposed to give you bliss or pleasure. From this point of view, meditation is not geared to giving you pleasure alone at all. It is possible that it might give you pleasure, but on the other hand it is also highly possible that it might be an extremely painful thing to do. So it is just letting things be.

S: What determines whether it is pleasurable?

TR: I suppose it depends on your criteria, it depends on you.

Student: What's wrong on the path, despite the pleasurable or painful effect of meditation, with the kind of pleasure of feeling you are walking in the right direction?

Trungpa Rinpoche: At the same time there is tremendous paranoia about that as well—if you are not walking on the path. Once you realize you are on the path, then you are also extremely aware of what is not on the path, which brings tremendous insecurity. So you cannot really rely on that.

Student: It seems as though life is terribly irritating, and in seeking the path we're seeking that which we hope will prove better. That isn't necessarily borne out by subsequent experiences, and as the pressure builds up on either side, the oscillation, the path seems to be the only way out.

Trungpa Rinpoche: If think so, yes. But because of that, therefore there are more terrifying nightmares that you might lose that ultimate hope as well. That is equally powerful. You see the path as *the* only cord that you can hang on to to save your life. Suppose this cord is fragile, breaks away—then you are doubtful. As long as there is any kind of maintenance going on, that always seems to be a hang-up, a problem—until the bodhisattva idea of giving up attaining enlightenment, which is the biggest step. Then your lifestyle *becomes* enlightenment. You don't need any kind of reassurance any more at all. You just maintain what you are constantly.

S: Maintain what you are?

TR: Behave normally. Of course, this normality is quite special.

Student: I got into a strange thing last week, while sitting—the realization that this striving for results had to give way. This recognition would appear, but somehow it didn't change the situation at all. There would be a moment or two of peace from the striving, but then it would always come back. I'm sort of riding on the coattails of this idea of yours of renouncing enlightenment and trying to be free of striving.

Trungpa Rinpoche: What about it?

S: Is this an ever-present part of what goes on?

TR: Automatically, if you disown the path, then the path is you. If you stop making money, then you're rich enough not to make any more money. You are really ultimately rich, because you don't have to try and make money anymore at all. That is the real mentality of richness; whereas if you are trying to maintain and make money, that is still the mentality of poverty. You are still maintaining your mentality of being poor.

S: This striving has to give way.

TR: That's right, yes.

S: But it doesn't. So in what direction does freedom from this striving come?

TR: You begin to realize that the whole area has been covered already. The only thing that bothers you is the striving, which is a hang-up. It is the one true, irritating obstacle on the path. Striving is the obstacle on the path—nothing else.

S: Is there any way you could use that striving?

TR: At this point, there doesn't seem to be. You could say that you could use striving as energy, patience, all kinds of ways. Of course you could say that. But at this point it seems to be too dangerous even to suggest the notion of striving transmuting into energy or patience. You really have to give up. You really have to cut the whole cord of ego out completely.

Student: It has been said that meditation develops bold will and that the enlightened man acts directly; his whole being is involved in any act that he does. How does this differ from striving?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is a sort of inborn delight, inborn delightfulness. For instance, if you want to meet your friend whom you haven't seen for a long time, making a journey toward seeing this friend doesn't seem to be an effort at all. You just drift along in the direction of your friend. It just happens, because you delight in the situation. It had nothing to do with punishing yourself or pushing yourself. Likewise, because you have such conviction in the idea of the awakened state of mind—in seeing that, in working with people, and helping them compassionately—you just enjoy that occupation, you just do it. That is the most powerful will of all, rather than purely trying to fight with yourself all the time. Our being here together also could be said to be the same example. People didn't try to go out to a restaurant and eat or have a

bath or relax in their bedrooms, but they decided to sit here on the floor and wait and listen. Nobody imposed that will on anybody. They just did it because they liked doing it. There may have been all kinds of obstacles in coming up to Vermont, for that matter, but they just decided to do it and they enjoy doing it. Therefore they are here, which could be said to be an example.

Student: Isn't there something fishy about *not* enjoying meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is not a question of enjoying the actual practice, which could be extremely horrible, but a step toward it is necessary. You have to do it anyway. You know that you are not going to enjoy it, but you still do it. You like the idea of it. There's something in it which is very hard to explain, very hard to describe intellectually, but something draws you toward it, a kind of instinct. It seems the whole basic idea is working on basic instinct, basic intelligence.

Student: Would you mind giving a bit more on the striving trip, please? It is connected with the watcher, I can see that. The watcher is checking things out: "How about arriving where I would like to arrive?" I really can't see anything beyond that point. Obviously, if the watcher gives way, then the striving isn't there—and the watcher also isn't there. What then?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Then you just happen.

S: Just like that.

TR: The situation just happens. It just happens.

S: Then why doesn't it just happen?

TR: Because the graveyard of the watcher is a very attractive place to be. You lost track of yourself for the last time. That is a very interesting place to be. Finally you have lost your hang-ups.

S: So there is an element of fascination?

TR: There is some kind of fascination which is not the watcher. It is a magnetic situation because the watcher is ultimate irritation, and you lost that on that particular spot. You come back to that spot constantly on and on and on. And finally, the killer is regarded as a friend.

S: I see that.

TR: I'm glad you do.

TWO

The Realm of the Gods

EACH EXPERIENCE OF psychological hang-ups or extremes has a pattern of its own, and that pattern could be seen in its distinctive character and qualities. In other words, in the human realm or the realm of gods, there are certain familiar desires and certain familiar longings, as well as in the realm of hell or the hungry ghost realm. There is a kind of fascination to maintain oneself constantly and not give up or give in to any possible spaciousness in which dualistic clingings no longer apply. So there is a great deal of grasping and holding and there is a great deal of effort to maintain.

We are willing to stick to confusion as our occupation and make it a habitual pattern of everyday life. In fact, that seems to be one of the main occupations of ego, because confusion provides a tremendously stable ground to sink into. Confusion also provides a tremendous way of occupying oneself. That seems to be one of the reasons there is a continual fear of giving up or surrendering. Stepping into the open space of the meditative state of mind seems to be very irritating. Because we are quite uncertain how to handle that wakeful state, therefore we would rather run back to our own prison than be released from our prison cell. So confusion and suffering have become an occupation, often quite a secure or delightful situation.

In the case of the realm of gods, that confusion has taken on a more genteel and sophisticated shape. The fundamental characteristic of the realm of the gods is dwelling on spiritual ideas of some kind. You experience a form of meditative absorption which is largely based on the ego

or on a spiritually materialistic approach. Spiritual materialism provides the framework of the occupation in this realm. Such meditative practice has to maintain itself by dwelling on something, that is to say, finding a particular topic of meditation. However profound, however high—seemingly profound, seemingly high—it may be, at the same time it has a solid body, rather than being transparent.

Such meditation practice is based, to begin with, on tremendous preparation, or one could call it self-development. Self-development meditation is acknowledging that you are going to practice meditation as a way of dwelling along with the ego. In order to find a place to dwell, not only are you creating the solidness of the place, but at the same time you are creating the self-consciousness of the dweller as well. There is tremendous self-consciousness. It is as if you are walking on slippery ground, icy ground: the ice in itself is not slippery, it is just icy; but immediately when you see ice, you associate it with being slippery. That is the self-consciousness: "If *I* walk on this ice, therefore *I* will be slippery, I will be falling down." So the ice has nothing to do with the slipperiness at all. Instead, it is that we are walking on this particular block of ice, and therefore it will be slippery to us. It is the same situation when we try to get hold of something in terms of meditative experience. It is not so much the experience itself, but it is that "I am going to experience this particular experience." Therefore it is automatically self-conscious: one is less conscious of the meditation and more conscious of the meditator. That is ego dwelling on itself.

One could apply all kinds of practices along this path, such as the self-absorption of limitless space, the self-absorption of limitless consciousness, and even the self-absorption of nondwelling and the self-absorption of complete emptiness. All kinds of states of mind, all kinds of states of meditation, could be experienced or manufactured by the self-conscious mind as definite things. Because of that, the meditation becomes mind-made, manufactured, prefabricated. Such meditation practices could include dwelling on a particular technique, such as the repetition of a mantra or a visualization. They are all connected with that dwelling process: you are not completely absorbed into the mantra, but *you* are doing the mantra; you are not completely absorbed into the visualization, but *you* are visualizing. The basic criterion is based on "me" and "I am doing this." So there is self-consciousness in the meditation practice, which leads to the realm of the gods.

By no means is this at all a frivolous effort. You *do* get extremely dramatic results out of these practices if you are completely into it, extremely dramatic results. We may experience bodily pleasures, absorption, physical bliss, and mental bliss. Because we try to get into ourselves with ourselves, it is an extremely crowded situation. We and our projections are put into one bag, and we try to push as hard as can. Having pushed, having forced it somewhat and tried to fit ourselves into one particular bag makes us dizzy, obviously. And quite possibly physical symptoms of all kinds occur in that kind of meditation of the realm of the gods.

In terms of our biological state of being, this may be referred to as hearing the sound of infinite universality. Obviously we do hear our own sound—but at that moment it is uncertain whether it is the universality of sound or whether it is the universality of ourself. It is based on the neurological setup of trying to hold on to one basic situation, one basic principle. So there is tremendous confusion between the ego type of sound-current yoga practice and the real transcendental type, although it is very hard to distinguish at that point. Sound-current vibrations could be heard as a neurological buzz in your head. For that matter, neurological visions could be provided from the extreme tension of being centralized into one thing. Trying to fit projections and projector into one square corner, one particular pigeonhole, automatically brings a kind of self-hypnosis. So in fact, neurological visions or neurological buzz could be heard or seen, perceived.

Likewise the experiences of limitless space and limitless consciousness could be seen as limitless because you are trying to lay a concept of limit on it—which is you, the moderator. Therefore you are seeing things as limitless because the moderator cannot reach beyond certain things. If the moderator decides to let go slightly, beyond its reach, it becomes limitless space or limitless consciousness or limitless emptiness, or whatever it may be. The result of that tremendously hard work and effort of dwelling on ego is that literally, psychologically and physically, we get high. We are completely intoxicated into that extreme way of pushing ourselves, demanding something from ourselves, and dwelling on ourselves. And that is the source of our living in the realm of the gods. So the realm of the gods is mostly the ego's version of spirituality, or spiritual materialism. That seems to be the starting point.

The other aspect of the realm of the gods is trying to dwell on any

seduction that happens within our living situation. Health, pleasure, beauty, and all kinds of things are taken into consideration. Trying to dwell on any of those is dwelling in the realm of the gods. The difference between reaching the realm of the gods and just enjoying pleasure is that in the realm-of-the-gods experience, or the bardo experience in the realm of the gods, you have struggle, a fear of failure and a hope of gaining. You build up, up, up to a crescendo manufactured out of hope and fear. One moment you think you are going to make it, and the next moment you think you are going to fail. The alternation of those two extremes builds up tension and striving. Such a process of striving is more than just simple discipline, or even transcendental discipline, in the sense of the second paramita. Because these ups and downs occur in our state of being and because they mean too much to us, so much to us, we go up and up, down and down and down. So we have all kinds of ups and downs, all kinds of "This is going to be the end of me" or "This is going to be the starting point of my development or my achievement of ultimate pleasure."

That struggle takes place constantly, and finally, at the final stage, we begin to lose the point of hope and fear. Hope becomes more likely fear, and fear becomes more likely hope, because we have been struggling so much. We begin to lose track of what is hope really and what is really fear altogether. We begin to lose track of who's going and who's coming. We are speeding so much that we get into extreme chaos. We lose track of who is against us and who is for us. There is a sudden flash—in terms of egohood, bewilderment, confusion—a moment in which pain and pleasure become one completely. Suddenly the meditative state of dwelling on ego dawns on us. Such a breakthrough! Tremendous achievement!

Then the pleasure, or bliss, begins to saturate our system, psychologically, spiritually, or physically. We don't have to care anymore about hope or fear, because we have achieved something. And quite possibly we could believe that achievement to be the permanent achievement of enlightenment, or whatever you would like to call it, union with God. At that moment, everything we see seems to be beautiful, loving. Even the most grotesque situations of life seem to be heavenly. Anything that exists, even the unpleasant or aggressive situations in life, is seen as something extremely beautiful, because we have achieved oneness with ego.

In other words, ego has lost track of its intelligence. This is the absolute ultimate achievement of bewilderment, the depth of ignorance, the spirituality of ignorance. It is extremely powerful. I once read a quotation in a Communist Chinese magazine under a portrait of Mao Tse-tung, saying, "Mao Tse-tung's inspiration is a spiritual atom bomb." This is that kind of spiritual atom bomb. It is self-destructive as well as destructive in relating with the rest of life with compassion, communication. And it is also destructive to stepping out of the bondage of ego. The whole thing about this approach of the realm of the gods is that it is purely going inward and inward and churning out more and more cords or chains to bind yourself further. The more the practice goes on, that much more bondage are we going to create. According to the scriptures, it is like the analogy of a silkworm, which binds itself as it produces silk thread, and finally suffocates itself.

So we could say that the realm of the gods has two aspects: one is the spiritual aspect, which has a self-destructive, self-hypnotic quality; the other aspect is the extreme search for pleasure, mentally and physically. Because such striving goes on all the time, you begin to lose the point, you begin to become accustomed to struggle, and you begin to learn to moderate your determination. You begin to accept what is given to you, and you begin to become somewhat sensible. Because the achievement of pleasure is limitless, because there is no end to achieving something, you begin to strike a happy medium. You try to be moderate or sensible, and you try to dwell on temporary happiness, materialistically. Those are two types of god realm. Both are pleasure-oriented entirely in the sense of the maintenance of ego. But in both cases the very thing which places you in the realm of the gods is losing track of hope and fear. We could see it spiritually or we could see it in terms of worldly concerns. The achievement of happiness, as it is experienced in the realm of the gods, is based on that particular experience of losing track of who is searching and what is our aim and object and goal—but trying to make the best of it. That could be seen in terms of worldly concerns and social situations as well as spiritually.

At the beginning we are searching or looking for happiness. But then we begin to enjoy the practice toward happiness as well, at the same time. We try to relax into the practice toward happiness, on the way to achieving absolute physical pleasure or psychological comfort. At the same time, halfway to achieving such comfort and pleasure, we begin to

give in and make the best of it. It is like an adventure also being used as a vacation or a holiday. You are on the way to your adventurous journey, your actual ultimate goal, but at the same time you use every step of every journey, regarding them also as a vacation, or holiday.

The realm of the gods, therefore, doesn't seem to be particularly painful, as far as its own actual situation is concerned. Instead, the most painful aspect of the realm of the gods is that when you think you have achieved something spiritual or worldly and you are trying to dwell on that, suddenly something shakes. Suddenly you realize that what you are trying to achieve is not going to last forever at all. For instance, at a certain stage, spiritual absorption in meditation becomes very shaky. You thought you were continuously going to enjoy this blissful state. But at some stage, that blissful state begins to become shaky and more irregular, ragged. The thought of maintenance begins to come into the mind. You try to push yourself back to this blissful state, but the karmic situation brings all kinds of irritations into it and at some stage you begin to completely lose faith in that blissful state. Suddenly there is the violence that you have been cheated. You realize that you cannot stay in the realm of the gods forever.

When the karmic situation shapes you up and begins to provide extraordinary situations that you have to relate to, then the whole process becomes disappointing. You either experience disappointment or anger toward the person who put you into such a journey. You begin to condemn yourself or the person who put you into that, and that sudden anger seems to turn you around. You end up angry, and your anger develops as hungry ghost–like anger, or the anger of the realm of hell, or the anger of human beings or jealous gods. You develop all kinds of anger or disappointment that you have been cheated, so you go back to one of the other five realms of the world. So you go on and on and on. At some stage, you might come up to the realm of the gods again, but then the same disappointment takes place and you go down again. The same thing comes up again and again. That is what is called *samsara*, which literally means continual circle, whirlpool, the ocean which spins round again and again. There is no end. That seems to be one of the qualities of bardo experience: you are in no-man's-land somehow, in terms of your daily experience as well as the experience after death, before the next birth.

Student: If you are in between different realms, how long do you stay stuck in the transitional state between one realm and another?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends on the force of your struggle, how violent it is. The more you are violent, the more you are forceful, the more you are speeding, that much more are you spinning around. In that way you get dizzy. So you introduce yourself into the bardo experience of the six realms of the world. It depends on your speed.

Student: Rinpoche, do you have to experience all six realms of the world before there is a possibility of release?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is not a question of really being necessary by any means. The whole thing is useless, you could say—but it happens constantly.

S: Rinpoche, if we see our meditation moving toward that, should we go with it?

TR: You have to have confidence in yourself and your practice, and you have to have clear perception. Then you automatically learn how to work with yourself.

Student: Would it be possible to go through the complete path of bardo experience and know the whole thing, and still not be able to stop it? Could one be aware of the process, and still not be able to stop it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think that is possible. You would only be able to stop it or to slow it down at the point of the journey itself, the journey leading up to a crescendo. At the moment you are speculating between hope and fear, at that moment you could slow down. And that is what is usually happening with us. But once you are at the fruition of it, it is very hard to stop it. That would be like trying to redirect the course of an arrow when it is on its way already.

S: You're helpless?

TR: Yes, it is a helpless situation at that point. It has been said that even the Buddha cannot change or interfere with your karmic fruition, and that it is impossible to do anything once you are in any of these realms. These realms we are talking about are different psychological states of madness. The six realms of the world occur within the human situation when you have gotten yourself into such a heavy trip that you do not hear somebody trying to help you. You do not see anything at all; you become completely deaf and dumb. Those kinds of neurotic

states of being that you manage to get yourself into in your living situation, in this life in particular, seem to be the subject that we are talking about, rather than the six realms of the world after death. The realm of the gods is also based on what we are in that daily living situation. So the six realms of the world could be said to be six types of psychotic states.

Student: Rinpoche, when a bodhisattva takes a vow to renounce enlightenment, would he be in the realm of the gods at that point?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you area bodhisattva, you are supposed to be out of those realms.

S: Then what are you renouncing, if you are not?

TR: You are renouncing attaining enlightenment.

S: What is the difference between being out of the six realms and enlightenment?

TR: Well, being out of the six realms of the world is an intermediate state. You could be in the situation of having come down from one realm and being just about to enter into another realm, which is still part of the samsaric circle. The bodhisattva could be in that state of no-man's-land as well, where you are not connected with any of the six realms or, for that matter, the idea of enlightenment. But the bodhisattva is directed toward enlightenment.

Student: Could you clarify the idea of bardo?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There are two definitions of bardo at this point. Bardo is in-between experience. And also when you are actually in the six realms of the world, you are in a bardo state. In particular, the sipa bardo is described as the bardo of existence, and you are in it. But in terms of bardo as intermediate state, you could say that it is a kind of relative bardo state. It is not quite a definitely fixed bardo state, as you experience in the six realms of the world.

S: So the difference is that in one you cannot prevent yourself from going into the others, like a psychotic change, and in the other you can.

TR: That's right. In the other, something can be done about it.

S: You said there were two situations. The helpless one is when it has come to the point where you cannot do anything about it.

TR: At that point, the karmic pattern just carries out.

S: At the other point, where there is hope, what do you do?

TR: You try to reduce your speed of jumping from one extreme to another.

S: How do you do that?

TR: Through all kinds of disciplines—like meditation, for instance.

S: But then we are just on the hope part of the hope and fear again.

TR: You have to reduce that as well. I mean, hope cannot be regarded as an achievement. If one regards hope in that way, it is also a hang-up; then fear becomes a hang-up as well.

Student: Rinpoche, in the biography of Milarepa, it says that anyone who hears his name will be saved from the lower realms—magically.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it depends on whether you hear his name—I mean, if you *hear* it.

Student: Rinpoche, how can you ever tell if you are slowing down and relaxing, or if you are just using that as something to achieve, as what you have to do to get out? If you are just doing it to achieve something, you are not really relaxing at all.

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you are really relaxed in the fullest sense, you do not have to watch yourself relaxing, you just happen. Relaxation just happens. Because you are fully being there, you do not have to maintain your relaxation as such. You are just there, being there completely. That is what the idea of relaxation really means; whereas in the other case, you are trying to maintain yourself in something. If there is maintenance of your relaxation, then it seems to be hypocritical.

Student: Rinpoche, it's very fascinating for us to listen to you describe the six states of bardo or six realms of being, but how do you, as an instructor or as a spiritual friend, think that it helps us to listen to these descriptions?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose that the whole idea of listening and learning is based on relating with ourselves constantly. I mean, it is quite possible that some people in this audience are not actually hearing the whole thing at all; they are just taking part in it very graciously. The words sort of pass through their minds, bypassing them. But in some situation of their life struggle, these words they heard come back again; sudden flashes begin to come to their mind. Suddenly such sentences, such ideas, begin to dawn in their mind—whenever it is needed. So it

seems that whatever you have heard, whatever you have understood, becomes applicable all the time, rather than that you deliberately try to apply it. I mean, the six realms of the world and all the ideas about bardo in this case are rather speculative. Discussions on how to meditate or practical things like that seem to be more realistic. But nevertheless, these speculative ideas also suddenly come into our mind when needed, flashing into applicable situations.

S: So we don't necessarily have to do something on the basis of what we've heard, but the flash itself is helpful?

TR: Well, that seems to be the way. But at the same time, it is also good to understand the intellectual aspect of the teaching. That is obviously very important. We can't just abandon everything purely to practice and not study. So if anybody is seriously thinking of getting into the path and practicing, you have to know the scholarly or the intellectual aspect equally, as much as the practice, if possible, so that you may be able to help others.

Student: Rinpoche, in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation,* in the section on karma, Gampopa talks about wholesome states of mind. He mentions limitless space and limitless consciousness, and describes them as leading to those wholesome states of mind. Yet you seem to regard them as almost pathological, or at least useless. Is that the same thing? What does Gampopa mean by wholesome?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think he actually describes that in great detail in describing the six realms of the world. He describes the realm of the first jhana, second jhana, third jhana, and fourth jhana, and the realm of the formless gods and their experience of limitless space, their experience of the meditative state. These practices could be based on egolessness, which could be said to be wholesome, or on ego. The difference between wholesome and unwholesome is based on how you relate with your ego.

S: In other words, limitless space could be based on ego or non-ego?

TR: Either could be possible, yes. These four jhana state practices are also regarded as the foundation, or common ground. In Tibetan, they are called *thünmong thekpa,* which means the vehicle or common ground where you develop mind training, to begin with, but with one condition—the absence of ego practice. In other words, you can meditate with ego or in an egoless way; it is your decision.

Student: I always thought that even if I decide to meditate without ego, when I sit it seems to be a function of what happens.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it's not quite that simple. We can't say that it is a decision, as such, but it seems to be a continual process of successive situations. And largely, the whole idea is that if you have a competent teacher who is not on an ego trip at all—otherwise he wouldn't be competent—such an egoless spiritual friend could relate with your egolessness, because he or she is egoless himself. I think that is the basic point where the need for guidance begins to arise, definitely. You need an example. You need someone to inspire you, so that you can afford to step out of ego without doing too much damage to yourself. That kind of inspiration is most important. And that seems to be the starting point.

Student: Ordinary everyday kinds of impulse, feeling, and thought are very much like the six realms of the world, but they are much less intense. All the time you are getting thoughts and reactions and feelings that, when you look at them, really are the six realms of the world. What is the difference?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Because you have these potentials in you all the time, that is why you could get yourself into such states—if you work yourself up.

S: But once you get into them, when it becomes so intense, you are locked in your intensity.

TR: Yes. You are completely stuck then.

Student: Aren't you always in one of those six realms?

Trungpa Rinpoche: No, not necessarily. There could be a state of mind which is loose and filled with junctures all the time. That is the fertile ground where a person could hear the teaching. But once you are in those six realms of the world fully and thoroughly, you become deaf, so you cannot hear the teaching at all. You cannot direct it anywhere, you are just stuck there.

S: What do you mean by "filled with junctures"?

TR: Alternatives, possibilities of giving up or taking on. I mean possibilities of letting yourself be inspired or possibilities of letting yourself be seduced. These kinds of junctures happen constantly—with, of course, an element of the six realms of the world in it as well, but not fully being in them.

Student: Rinpoche, in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* seminar you mentioned that the human realm was the realm of possibilities, and that in the other realms you were more or less fixed. What is there psychologically about the human realm that gives it these possibilities to get out of samsara?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In this case we are talking about all six realms as being fixed extremes, so the human realm is also a fixed extreme. But generally the experience of the six realms of the world could be felt only in the human realm, as we are doing. And those junctions also seem to be attributes of the human realm, in that sense. But then you could get into the human realm *of* the human realm, which is an extreme case. You could get stuck in it.

S: With those junctures, as soon as you choose one, don't you start to eliminate that point of juncture? In other words, we can only have possibilities when we're not moving. As soon as we move, we eliminate some of the possibilities.

TR: That is why you can step out of all those extreme cases.

S: By not moving?

TR: By realizing the possible inclination toward the next extreme case.

S: By not choosing it?

TR: You don't have to choose, but it comes to you. I mean, these six realms of world are just presented to you. The extreme search for sensual pleasure of the realm of the gods or the extreme anger of the realm of hell are just presented to you by a succession of coincidences, seemingly.

S: If you want to stay cool—

TR: You can't stay cool—unless you have some practice, like training your basic mind through the discipline of meditation. Otherwise, you cannot stay cool just because you do not want to take part in any of those. You can't do that at all. It's almost an involuntary thing. You have been programmed into the samsaric world because you are in it.

Student: Rinpoche, you said that scriptural knowledge was necessary in order to help other people. But why is that so? Once you realize the truth, why can't you approach it directly and transmit it directly as opposed to going through the scriptures? Why do you have to use the scriptures?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you don't have to use them as though you've been programmed by the scriptures. But you can't help relating with such earthy ideas, the earthy statements that lineage people in the past have made and the practices they have gone through themselves. Their examples, the messages they left behind, are automatically applicable to your life, so you can't help imparting that to others. It just happens naturally. You don't have to become a preacher at all, but you just sail along through the ocean of dharma.

S: Why couldn't we just separate out or emphasize things like mindfulness or the technique of meditation, as opposed to talking about the scriptures?

TR: Well, if you are talking about mindfulness, I think you are talking about scriptures.

S: Not in the historical sense.

TR: I don't mean scriptures in the historical sense, but as actual descriptions of life. The experience of the six realms of the world that we have been discussing is also taken from the scriptures, but it seems to be more experiential than just retelling stories or myths.

THREE

The Jealous God Realm

THE REALM OF THE GODS provides a background of the different experiences of meditative absorption, and also materialistic absorption in the world of sensual pleasure. That seems to be one of the basic key points to work through in the six realms of the world. There are also six states of bardo which are related with the six realms of the world: the bardo of meditation (clear light), the bardo of birth, the bardo of illusory body, the bardo of the dreamlike quality of experiences, the bardo of existence or becoming, and the bardo of death. Those six types of bardo experience could be seen in conjunction with the six realms of the world; we could almost say that each realm we are in always has the qualities of the six bardos: the qualities of birth, death, meditative absorption/clear light, illusion, and becoming or existence—as well as the quality of dharmata, or a sense of space. So each realm contains the six types of bardo experience. The different realms of being—like the hungry ghost realm or the human being realm or whatever—are the background experience. And within that background, there are the natural qualities of that background, which are the six bardos. For instance, if you are in the realm of the gods, you could have a dreamlike experience or a meditative absorption–like experience, or other bardo experience like that. So the six types of bardo experience are connected with the six realms of the world very closely. On the other hand, we could also relate how each realm is contained in each type of bardo. It could also work that way. But at this point, that seems to be too complicated, so many figures are involved.

The next realm is the realm of the jealous gods, or asuras. *Asura* is a Sanskrit word which literally means "nongod": *a* is negative, *sura* is "god," so *asura* is "nongod." It is quite likely that having had the meditative absorption of the realm of the gods, sudden disappointment comes about, the disappointment that you have been cheated, that this is not a permanent experience at all. Therefore you turn around. Your experience turns around completely, and sudden envy begins to develop, jealousy begins to develop. You realize that you haven't been given the full truth and you haven't understood ultimate freedom—although you thought what you had achieved was the ultimate freedom of spiritual absorption.

Losing faith brings a tremendously sharp sense of relativity, a sense of comparison: "If that is so, why is this not so?" It is a kind of schizophrenic experience. Often schizophrenics are very intelligent. If you are trying to help them, work with them, then automatically they interpret your intention as laying heavy trips on them, so they do not want to be helped. But if you decide not to help, then automatically they feel you are seeking comfort, that you don't want to work with them either. And if you are trying to present alternatives, then automatically their reaction is that you are trying to play games with them, which is true. It is a very intelligent state of mind, but at the same time it is such a split mind. It is so powerful that it sees all the corners, every corner. You think you are communicating to them face-to-face, but in actual fact they are looking at you from behind your back. That is the asura mentality of extreme paranoia, which includes extreme efficiency and accuracy at the same time. The Tibetan word for jealousy is *tragdok. Trag* is "shoulder," *dok* means "crowded," so *tragdok* means overcrowdedly selfish, in other words, too much shoulder to get through traffic, so to speak. It is kind of a defensive form of pride.

The asura realm, or realm of the jealous gods, is also associated with heavy wind. It has the karma family quality of speeding and trying to achieve everything on the spot, trying to make sure that your experiences are valid and that nobody is going to attack you—that kind of situation. We get to the bardo experience of that realm by too much comparison, too much comparative work. In other words, it is the extreme paranoia of trying to save yourself, trying to attain something higher and greater constantly. In order to try to attain something higher and greater, the conclusion from the jealous-gods point of view is that if

you watch for every possible pitfall, then you will be saved. That is the only way to save yourself.

Jealous gods come to that conclusion and then put it into action. You don't even have a chance to get ready and prepare to put it into action, into practice. You just do it without preparation. The jealous god is trying also to develop a kind of spontaneity of its own kind and feels quite free to do that. It is all too comparative. In other words, the asura realm contains lots of elements of game playing, of the gamelike quality of living situations. The whole thing is regarded as purely a game, in the sense of opponents and yourself. You are constantly dealing with me and them, me and the rest of the world, me and my friends, and often me and myself. There is a buildup of too much comparative mentality.

To begin with, you have to train yourself to be such an ambitious person; but then at a certain stage, that kind of training becomes part of your character. So you do not have to train yourself to do it but it just naturally happens. You are sort of a born jealous person, as though jealousy were part of your instinct, your state of being. There is that quality of wind or air in everybody's being; that quality of speed in everyone. The asura quality magnifies that particular characteristic, so that all corners are regarded as suspicious or threatening; and therefore one must look into it and be careful about it. At the same time, the asura realm is not quite related with hiding oneself or camouflage at all. It is very direct. You are very willing to come out in the open and to fight if there is a problem or if there is seemingly a plot against you. You just come out and fight face on and try to expose that plot. There is a kind of schizophrenic quality of coming into the open and facing the situation, and at the same time being suspicious of yourself as well.

You also begin to develop another asura characteristic: the deaf and dumb quality of refusing to accept, refusing to learn anything. If something is presented by outsiders, because everyone is regarded as an enemy from an asura point of view, they must be trying to do something. Even the most kind person trying to help you is regarded with suspicion, as though that person had some plot in mind. So the possibility of communication is completely shut off—as a result of the extraordinarily high-strung communication that has built up within yourself due to your paranoia, which blocks out whole areas of communication and spaciousness. You do not want to be helped. At the same time, you regard any help you receive, any benefits from being helped, as very

precious. It is so precious that therefore you cannot accept such a situation as possible. It is *too* precious. Therefore you do not really want to admit that somebody actually could do that precious and worthwhile performance on you at all. You tend to develop such a blockage in communication because your jealousy or envy is very accurate and at the same time very paranoid. It is a sort of antenna or radar which registers everything. But you read that registration wrongly—purely in terms of enemy rather than any kind of warmth.

Therefore, jealousy or envy could be said to be dependent on coldness, the complete opposite of compassion or love, the windy, stormy quality of cold, biting cold. And the element of speed is the only refuge. That is the realm of the asuras: very cold and bleak. That kind of feeling is dominant in the asura realm. And at a certain point, when you actually arrive at that particular realm as a one hundred percent situation, it tends to develop in the same way as the realm of the gods. You begin to lose the point: who is defending whom; who is trying to protect whom? You are completely bewildered, and you begin to lose the point altogether, any kind of reference point. But at the same time, you try to maintain that harshness constantly, all the time. That is quite an interesting highly strung characteristic that one could develop, if one is inclined toward such extremes.

All of these six different realms are connected with our innate nature, or psychological being, which has the qualities of fire, water, air, earth, and space. All of these qualities are within us, and each element or quality is connected with one of these realms. So it is possible to magnify particular qualities, which is what is meant by being in the realm of the gods or the realm of asuras, or whatever realm it may be. There is no fixed concept, such as "Now you are in the realm of the gods; now you are in the realm of the asuras"—but it is the intensely extreme case of whatever comes up. In other words, we all have schizophrenic qualities, claustrophobic qualities, paranoid qualities. All the neurotic tendencies that you can possibly think of in terms of human insanity are also in us, because they are connected with the elements, as the other side of the coin.

It seems that parts of that other side of the coin could become prominent when the external situation happens to thrust us into an extreme case as a result of being unable to relate with things as they are. That is a result of not seeing things as they are, but at the same time trying

to manage ourselves and grab hold of the nearest situation and make something out of it in order just to survive, in order just to maintain one's ego. And because of that, therefore, the birth of the six realms is automatically given. As the panic becomes prominent, we occupy ourselves with *something;* not knowing what to do, we grasp the nearest situation of confusion. Therefore, basic ignorance is referred to as one of the most important conditions for giving birth to the six realms of the world. You cannot give birth to the six realms unless there is bewilderment and uncertainty. Because of this bewilderment and uncertainty, something happens. Something is floating nearby, and you try to get hold of it and it happens to be the wrong thing to hold on to—all the time.

Student: Rinpoche, which one of the bardos is this realm connected with?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The asura realm also has all of the six bardo types in it already. It has the quality of being dreamlike; it has the impermanent quality of experience, which happens and then dissipates, which is death; it is also trying to create new situations, which is birth; also there is the quality of absorption, which is the meditative state; and there is an occasional spacious, or clear light quality, as well. So this realm contains all six types of bardo.

S: That's not true of all the realms, though, is it?

TR: All of them.

Student: You once were talking about hell, and you said that it does not have pulsations, but that it is this constant thing with no gaps.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it has to have a background of some kind in order to operate. It does not have a gap in the sense of changing frequencies, but you have to exist somewhere. That maintenance, or existence in itself, is within some kind of space. Otherwise we could not experience suffering at all, if there were no suffering and sufferer.

S: So even in hell there is the possibility of release?

TR: In that view of gap, there is a misunderstanding, in that gap is regarded as a release or as relief of some kind, that you will be excused from extreme situations. In that sense there is no gap. That kind of release or relief does not exist in the hell realm at all. But in order for your suffering to function, you have to have lubrication of some kind.

Student: I don't know whether this is the same question or not, but I am wondering what the opening is. The asura realm has very particular mechanics, a very particular way of maintaining itself. Just what is the possibility of breaking through those mechanics? I wonder how an opening could take place there?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The opening seems to take place by itself.

S: Right, but just as there would be a particular mechanics to the maintenance, I should think there would be a specific sort of shock that would cause there to be a big gap in that maintenance process.

TR: That's part of the service, so to speak.

S: Service?

TR: Yes. It comes with the service. If you fill your gas tank, somebody else automatically wipes your windshield.

S: Would you then have a possibility of clearing up your vision?

TR: A possibility.

S: The breakthrough quality in this particular maintenance process would have to do with clearing up your vision?

TR: In terms of wearing out being in the state of the asuras. You have to maintain yourself constantly, and at some stage you begin to lose your logic, you begin to lose your faith. It is the same as being in the realm of the gods: you begin to realize that your tactic, or the meditative absorption that you have developed, is not foolproof, and you begin to wonder. As long as you begin to wonder, then automatically you are providing a more spacious situation, and other doubts come into it as well. So your experience of being in the realm of the asuras begins to diminish as you go along, the same as in the other realms. It is exactly the same thing. You see, usually one experiences a definite sense of occupation, once you are in a particular realm. It is as though you have made a great discovery: you relate to that; you would like to believe that whole thing as part of your makeup; you would like to associate with that whole thing as part of you. You begin to enjoy playing that kind of game because you have found a very solid occupation. But somehow that does not last very long; it begins to diminish.

Student: Rinpoche, socially how does one deal with or how does one communicate with this type of person?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems to be very difficult to communicate with an asura. It is kind of an isolated situation of its own.

S: Is there any possibility of communication?

TR: You see, the trouble is, if you try to communicate with an asura person, asura being, each communication could reinforce their trip. Communication could be interpreted as trying to destroy them.

S: How do you deal with a student who has come to that place?

TR: Somehow that does not happen. If you are student, you want to learn something. Therefore, you are already open. So you cannot possibly be a student and also be an asura at the same time. For that matter, you cannot be a student and be in the realm of the gods, either. A student is looking for an occupation, so you cannot be a student who tends to be stuck in the six realms of the world at all. If you are really a student, if you want to learn something, you have to give something out, you have to relate to something. But if you become a self-made spiritual person or self-made businessman, whatever it may be, then it is possible that you cease to relate to yourself as a student or a learner and you regard yourself as having found some occupation. You have found an occupation within the six realms of the world.

Student: Why is accuracy so apparent in this realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is part of an asura's way of maintaining that whole game.

S: But it seems that in all the realms there is confusion, so it is surprising that accuracy is associated with this confusion.

TR: The accuracy is part of the confusion. If you want to get really confused, you have to be accurately confused.

S: By accuracy, I suppose that you mean you have all kinds of interpretations for events.

TR: Yes. You have all kinds of possible ways of maintaining your own confusion.

Student: You said one is always reaching out for something, and whatever happens to be there is the wrong thing. But if it's there at all, isn't it part of the situation and therefore right at the moment in some way?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it may seemingly be right at the moment, at that moment, but it is very difficult to say. If somebody is going to rob you on the spot, it seems to be right to be robbed at that moment.

S: Well, what did you mean by wrong in that sense?

TR: That sense of wrong has to do with whether something creates

further confusion or whether it clears up the situation. A right situation is not supposed to create further confusion, because it is precise. If a situation presents confusion, then it is the wrong thing.

S: But isn't the alternative also there: that just as one can be confused by it, so it can also be the guru to teach you at that moment?

TR: If you are confused, you will find it very difficult to learn from it—unless you realize your confusion as it is. If you become part of the confusion completely, you will not have any questions at all to ask. But if you are partially confused, or if you are enlightenedly confused, then the confusion brings more questions. In that case you are not really confused at all; you are beginning to find a way out of it—because you ask questions, because you begin to speculate, you are not trapped in it at all.

Student: What happens if what you're reaching for is not something you want to hold on to? What happens then, if you continue to be confused?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, then you get out of the situation. I mean, you don't have to hold on to it anymore.

S: What happens then?

TR: At the beginning it is quite irritating, because there is nothing to relate with; the whole thing is very loose. Before, you had occupations—fixed and solid occupations. But it is the way out anyway, because you are not bound by anything at that point.

Student: In the asura realm, it seems you are so wrapped up in its gamelike quality that you don't even realize that what you are doing is a game.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That gamelike quality of comparing situations in order to maintain one's own paranoia is a way of maintaining itself. You feel you have found a very intricate way to interpret things. Things become fascinating, intricate. And seemingly you can work with those interpretations you have made: you feel that if somebody is trying to help you, you could read something into it and try to prove to yourself that that person is actually trying to destroy you.

Student: Rinpoche, where is the pleasurable aspect of the realm of the asuras?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The pleasure comes from the sense that you are being smart enough that you haven't been caught anywhere. You manage even to interpret those who are trying to help you as trying to destroy you.

S: What if the persons who are trying to help you really are trying to destroy you, in the sense that if you would be helped you would cease to be a jealous god?

TR: Yes. Quite possibly. That is a kind of fascination with the occupation.

Student: On the reaching process, you said that you reach for the wrong thing. Is the implication there that you could reach for the right thing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you try to reach you can't seem to do it—unless the situation is presented to you. Automatically there is some subtlety from the external situation.

Student: Do all the bardo states contain grasping?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Of some kind or another, yes, like the absorption of the realm of the gods and the jealousy of the asuras. There is always the attempt to grasp something.

S: How do you give up grasping, or step out of it?

TR: Well, you can't just give up grasping just like that. Automatically, you are aware of yourself giving up grasping, which means you are grasping nongrasping. So it seems that the ultimate and obvious thing is that one has to give up the person who is grasping.

S: How do you do that?

TR: By not doing anything—meditating.

Student: Rinpoche, you said the asuras were associated with the karma family quality. What quality are the gods associated with?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The world of the gods is associated with the buddha family, meditative absorption. Asuras are associated with the karma family. We are getting more complicated here.

Student: How does one become an asura?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You find yourself in it, I suppose.

S: What drives persons from other states to the asuras?

TR: Speculative and intellectual speculation, which is largely based on trying to maintain oneself constantly. If one tries to maintain oneself constantly, then one also has to look into the negative aspect of maintenance: Who is preventing our maintenance? What's the problem with it? One has to develop jealousy.

Student: It sounds as if becoming an asura is one of a variety of available practices for defending yourself.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes.

S: Are there any special characteristics of a person who might choose this tactic over others?

TR: I think it is largely based on the ambition to cover all areas. You make sure that you have the complete right to become emperor, yearning for ultimate comfort where there is not one small instant to irritate you at all and the whole thing is completely under control. It is sort of warlord-minded.

Student: You talked about how all of these six realms coexist with each other and how one is predominant. Do you mean, in terms of an actual person over a period of weeks and months, that one is predominantly in one realm? Or can it even be a question of one day—that a person moves from being predominantly in the realm of the gods to the asura realm in one day? In that way it changes very quickly.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It could change very quickly as well as you could be stuck for years and years. It is the same as the general idea of the bardo experience after death. The traditional estimate is that it lasts seven weeks, but it has been said that a person with strong karmic force could take his or her next birth immediately after death, or he also could be suspended for centuries and centuries. So the same thing could occur here. Those who are able to find themselves in such realms for a long time have more determination. They are more self-centered, and they have found their occupation for life. In some cases, we could say that we get ourselves into these six types of psychotic states constantly; we get into them and we come out of them all the time.

Student: You said that the six realms, because of their extreme intensity, are a bardo of some sort. And then you said that each realm has the

qualities of the six bardo states. I don't quite understand what type of bardo the six realms are.

Trungpa Rinpoche: All of it.

S: But doesn't one predominate? Isn't there in each realm a predominance of one of the bardo states?

TR: Well, that depends on the details of the psychological state. Whether it is predominantly a dreamlike quality, or a predominantly meditative-like quality, or whatever it may be. You see, each realm has to maintain itself by the different elements, and these elements contain six types, which are the six bardos.

S: I understand that the six realms altogether are the sipa bardo. Is that correct?

TR: You could say that our human life on earth, what we are now, is the basic sipa bardo state, in general. But within that we also have psychological states: godlike, hell-like, hungry ghost–like. Characteristic psychological states pertain all the time.

Student: Rinpoche, do people in different realms have a tendency to seek each other out? Do they flock together? Do they try to destroy or conquer each other? I'm wondering how they interrelate?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose you could have some kind of affinity, maybe; but on the other hand, if you are an asura, when you meet another asura, it would be regarded as a mockery of yourself.

S: Rinpoche, if you were an asura, would you have a more comfortable affinity to a person in another realm?

TR: That is very hard to say. It depends on the basic strength of your sense of security, how intent you are on being in that state.

Student: I have a very specific, practical question. There are people with this characteristic around, and you may find yourself running into them, perhaps at work. It sounds rather hopeless, that there is no chance of communication. Yet if you are with a person who is in the asura realm, which sounds like a very dire kind of dilemma, you might want to do anything you could to communicate, to share yourself. You would like to do anything that you might be able to do to help him or her out of that realm. Is there anything you can do, or do you just simply have to recognize the hopelessness of it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends on how you find the means to commu-

nicate to them. It is very intricate, and you have to be extremely skillful, because you cannot attempt it several times—you have to do it accurately at once. That communication comes from your style and the style of the other person. It is feasible that you may be able to help, but quite likely it is impossible.

Student: In pictures of the wheel of life, a buddha appears in each realm.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, you have to be a buddha—that's right.

S: What is he doing in the realm of the asuras?

TR: He is speaking their language in an enlightened way. In the iconography, the buddha of the asura realm is wearing armor and carrying a sword in his hand. That is their language.

Student: Could you distinguish between a bardo and nonbardo state?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that in the nonbardo state, there are no extremes, but situations could be switched back and forth. It is quite loose. There are so many junctions that you are not stuck in it, but you can make your choices; whereas in a bardo state, you are completely stuck, you are trapped in between two extremes, like extreme pain and extreme pleasure. You are trapped in it: if you try to go too far, you find yourself in extreme pleasure and you don't want to leave it; but if you go to the other extreme, you find yourself in extreme pain and you don't know how to get out of it. So you are sort of trapped in that situation—like meditative absorption or the jealous god thing or whatever it might be. Each extreme case presents a prison of its own, so you have no way out of it. The nonbardo state is like the questioning mind, or the true function of buddha nature. It is the dissatisfaction that takes place in the actual realm of people: you could communicate, you have questions, you have doubts, you could make choices of all kinds.

S: Then why is the clear light a bardo state? Is that a trap too?

TR: Clear light, in this case, is a transparent situation which could be colored by all kinds of other experiences. Clear light is generally a state of no-man's-land—and it could be made into someone's territory.

S: What if it isn't colored?

TR: Clear light is also the experience of buddha nature. It even transcends buddha nature. In that sense clear light becomes an aspect of nonreturning.

S: In other words, you don't have any sense of being in such a state?

TR: You are part of it, yes. You are part of it.

S: In actual practice how do bardo and nonbardo come together?

TR: It seems that if you have found your fixed logic, your way of maintaining your ego, your occupation, then you are in a bardo state of some kind or other; whereas, if you are still searching, if you are still open—or if you are free from searching altogether—that is the nonbardo state.

S: What about the transitions between bardo states? Are there moments of nonbardo there?

TR: Well, there are occasional doubts as to whether you are actually in that state forever, whether you have actually found some answers or not. You are uncertain and your bardo state begins to shake; your conviction begins to fall apart. And as your conviction gets more and more shaken and falls apart more—then you come out of that particular extreme case. You come back to the nonbardo state. You become a student again.

S: That's the difference between searching and not searching? It seems that very often you give the message of not searching, and yet now you say that the characteristic of the nonbardo state is the searching.

TR: Yes, it is so.

S: Are you asking us to get back into the bardo?

TR: I don't think so. Quit searching.

Student: Rinpoche, is the clear light comparable to the nonbardo state?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends. The clear light seems to be like water which has no color. If you put colors into it, the clear light absorbs that color; but still the water quality, which is colorless, remains.

S: How does that relate to the nonbardo state?

TR: Because there is also a colorless quality, even while being colored. If you pour paint into water, the water still remains transparent while it is carrying the different colors.

Student: Is there a state which is beyond bardo?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That seems to be the final state of realization—you are not searching anymore and you are not trapped anymore.

S: Is that taking the situation as it is all the time?

TR: Yes.

S: Is it a real possibility?

TR: You have to find out.

S: Do you feel you have some answers? Should we search for them?

TR: Searching seems to be a kind of introduction, to open your mind toward something. The style of that search is nonsearch. Do you see what I mean?

S: Nongrasping?

TR: Nongrasping, yes. If you decide to search, you have questions, you have doubts—that's good. But how to answer your problems, how to find a way out of doubts is nongrasping, which is not searching.

Student: How do we relate to ourselves if we find ourselves behaving like jealous gods?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose that you could relate with yourself as being willing to step out of the comfort of being in such a state. That is very, very hard to do, because you have found your style, which for a long time you were looking for. We want to become somebody, which automatically means we would like to have our own style, our own dignity. Everybody longs for that. We admire people who have character; we admire people who have a style of their own, and we want to become like them. So once you have found a style of some kind, whether it is a realm-of-gods style or asura style, it is quite a delightful situation in the beginning that at last you are *somebody.*

But then, if we realize it is an asura—at that point we have developed a term for it and a frame of reference for it. We have labeled it as being that particular type of samsaric realm. So I suppose we are supposed to get the message, and be willing to step out of that comfort of creating a style of our own, and be willing to get back to the confused state where we did not have any style. It is very hard to give that up.

S: Did you say that all six bardo states are a resource that someone following the style of any one of the six realms can draw upon at any moment in order to continue his particular style of maintenance?

TR: No doubt, yes. That generally happens, but that is not regarded as being stuck in a realm, necessarily. You are acting on your potentials. You are trying to pull out, rather than actually being stuck in a realm. That seems to happen constantly all the time with everyone and anyone.

It is not regarded as your actually being in a realm as such, but you are exploring your possible ways of defending yourself.

Student: But how does the dream state reinforce any of the realms, because dreams have a tendency to point out what the real situation is to us, to remind us of the things that we've been forgetting while we were in the human realm. So in that sense, the dream state seems to me to be trying to tug you out of whatever realm you find yourself in at the moment.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, dreams relate to either something that you would like to happen in the future or something that happened to you already in the past. It may not be a particularly accurate picture at the moment, but it gives you tremendous room to venture around. The bardo of dreams is kind of the realm of the imagination rather than dreams per se—imagination and possible ideas. It is completely devoid of relating with the physical situation, but it is the idea of purely relating with the phenomenal situation. All these realms have an unreal quality in them as well. Because you are trying to hold on so tightly, so hard, because it is so real; therefore sometimes it becomes very loose and very dreamlike, mirage-like, at the same time. That is one of the characteristics of bardo states—that confusion between seriousness and looseness. And then occasionally, one has to bring oneself back to it.

Student: Perhaps if a person is in this realm, and in a meditative state or a dream state where there is that kind of looseness, there is the possibility of communicating with that person for a split second.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that is a very sneaky way of communicating. It could work, but at the same time, if you raise too much alarm, quite possibly they might jump back onto their solid ground and pretend they are not dreaming at all. But it is highly possible. That seems to be one of the ways the buddhas communicate with them. The buddhas of each realm communicate by using the teaching of the situation. For instance, they might be sharing the same situation at the same time—like walking on a very shaky bridge where they both have to walk carefully. So you can communicate from that.

Student: Asuras seem so defensive.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The asura realm in particular is very much on guard. Their ultimate fear is that this is what people do, try to get you; and they are very much on guard for that particular style.

S: Is there a way to outsmart them?

TR: I don't think so. As far as asuras are concerned, they have worked everything out very methodically. And that could be said to be the same with the other realms as well. The whole thing is worked out very methodically. You may come on as though you are using the other person as a guinea pig, but the other person is not a guinea pig at all. He or she is a professional person in the six realms of the world—so he could come back at you and use *you* as a guinea pig.

S: What about nonverbal communication?

TR: That is also very tricky. They could also reject your vibrations, or whatever you would like to call them.

S: It sounds very important to be on the side of such a person, rather than being in any way opposed to him.

TR: Well, even that makes it a very suspicious thing—you may be trying to sabotage him.

Student: Rinpoche, what would you say to the technique of intensifying the paranoia so the paranoia becomes real?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There has to be a balance of how to deal with that. I mean, that kind of tactic in particular could only be used once. If you misuse it once, then you fail all the rest of it. So that is an expensive thing.

Student: Rinpoche, you used the term *schizophrenic* in relation to people in the asura realm. And then you also said, in one of the answers to the questions, that such a person, in order to maintain himself, is seeking to develop a character or personality or identity. Now, I think that when psychologists talk about schizophrenia, they say that one of the schizophrenic's qualities is that he doesn't have a character, he doesn't have an identity, he doesn't know who he is, and so he doesn't feel comfortable with himself. You are saying the schizophrenic person is seizing on his identity, and the psychologists are saying he doesn't have an identity. It seems to be a conflict.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, in one sense, he doesn't have an identity in the same way ordinary people have a permanent identity as such. But he does have some kind of identity, because he is a professional at his game, and whenever he realizes he doesn't have an identity, he jumps back to his game. So he has this extremely skillful, professional kind of approach. The same thing could be said of the asura realm: fundamentally you are

insecure; therefore your security is without security. That situation gives you a tremendous sense of occupation, something to do. You are kept busy at it all the time so you don't have to think of your insecurity anymore. You are kept busy constantly playing games. But at the same time, you know *how* to play games. It is obvious to you, you do not have to think or strategize anymore at all, it just comes naturally to you, spontaneously you just do it.

S: So the schizophrenic person has a deliberate quality about his seeking?

TR: Yes, and an impulsive quality—which is very confident, as far as their game is concerned.

Student: What about energy? Is there only one energy, or are there different types of energies for each realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I suppose you could say there are different textures or different colors, like the different energies of the five buddha families. But all of those energies are governed by ego. Therefore the general quality of the energy is the maintenance of ego; all the effort is given to that.

Student: Rinpoche, I'm trying to compare this with what you said about bardo in the seminar in Allenspark. There I got the impression that you hang out in one of the six realms, and when the experience characteristic of that realm becomes particularly intensified, you peak out in what you call the bardo. And at that point, where you peak out, there is the possibility of freaking out or the possibility of receiving something, catching on to something. Here I get the impression, on the other hand, that most of the time we go about maintaining ourselves and we sort of hang out in the bardo state; and only some of the time are we open and looser about it. So the bardo state, rather than being a place where you might possibly receive something, is a place where you are just stuck.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The whole point is that you have to have a sense of extreme case. In the situation of an extreme case, there is the likelihood that you could intensify the bardo experience and switch into a nonbardo state. But that cannot really be helped by anything at all—by an external situation or by teachers or anything. You have to do it yourself. Either you do it yourself or it doesn't happen. So it is a very manual

situation—you do it by yourself. On the other hand, there is the possibility that the intensification of the bardo experience could be reduced by occasional doubt and occasional gaps, and you could come back from one realm and then maybe enter into another one, or reenter the previous one. That kind of situation goes on all the time. But they are both intense situations: one intense situation brings you back; the other intense situation frees you completely. However, at this point we have not yet touched on that particular topic and on the details of relating with the different types of wisdom of the five buddha families and the different realms associated with them—in terms of intensifying the extreme of confusion, and that confusion bringing realization.

FOUR

The Human Realm

TODAY WE COULD DISCUSS the human realm, which is associated particularly with passion. The human realm is not necessarily the literal state of human life as such. There is something to keep in mind in discussing all of these states, or realms: in a sense they are all aspects of human life, which contains six types of world, or realms, within itself. The human realm in these terms is also a certain state of mind, and we tend to get stuck in this extreme as much as in that of the asuras or the realm of the gods.

So the human realm seems to have two possibilities. One is actual human life, which contains tremendously open karmic possibilities in which we could function intelligently and make choices, in which we could study and meditate, and in which we could change the karmic situation as we evolve. But the other type of human realm, the human realm as part of the six realms of the world, is an extreme case of the human realm, which is an effect of a certain extreme chaos. From that extreme chaos, related with passion, this extreme human realm begins to develop—much the same as in human life we may develop the animal realm, the hungry ghost realm, the jealous gods realm, or whatever.

The human realm in this sense is a process of grasping, extreme grasping in which a certain amount of intelligence functions. In other words, intelligence in the sense of logical, reasoning mind functions. The reasoning mind is always geared toward trying to create happiness, pleasurable situations. And there is an immediate tendency to separate the pleasure and the experiencer of the pleasure. There is also a sense of

being lost, a sense of poverty, often accompanied by nostalgia, trying to re-create past pleasurable situations as well. This is a result of an extreme dualistic split: projections are regarded as the ultimate answer to bring about some kind of comfort, and therefore you feel inadequate, as the projector. You are not strong enough or magnetic enough to draw these extremes of external pleasure into your realm. So you try your best to draw them in. Often there is a tendency to be very critical, to have a critical attitude. There is a critical attitude toward other people in this human realm; you see them as imperfect. And you begin to see your own situation as one of perfecting. Achieving ideal perfection becomes a fantastic, sensational target to reach. So there is constant striving.

The human realm is associated, in terms of the buddha families, with the padma family mentality of magnetizing. It is a selective magnetizing in which if you are to magnetize, you have to have discriminating vision: you want to magnetize the best qualities, the highest or most pleasurable situations, the most sophisticated and most civilized. That style of magnetizing is quite different from the magnetizing process involved in the asura realm, which, again, is connected with jealousy. In the asura realm magnetizing is very blind; it is not as selective and intelligent as that of the human realm. The human realm altogether contains so much selection, and also the rejection of certain things as not your style. There is a tremendous sense that you have your own ideology and you have your own style and you magnetize situations in order to enrich your basic being. That way of magnetizing has to be precise. So in this case, the human realm seems to be extremely selective and fussy. You have to have the right balance of everything.

The human realm is also accompanied by a comparative intellectual understanding of others. On the one hand, others may have your style. On the other hand, other people may not meet your taste, your style, so they could be criticized, condemned. Another possibility is that they might meet your style, and in fact be much better at your style, sort of ideal, superior to you. You wish to be one of those people who are much more intelligent than you and have very refined taste. They are leading pleasurable lives or getting the right things you would like to have, but which they actually managed to do. This could happen either in terms of historical persons, which could be said to be mythical persons at that point, or in regard to your contemporaries. You have observed them, you have seen them, you have been with them, and you are highly im-

pressed by those who have perfected things intellectually, convincingly, from a practical point of view. You are also envious. They have gotten everything together and you would like to be one of them. This could be said to be like the jealous god mentality, in general point of view, but it is not quite so. It has the quality of grasping; this mentality is based on grasping, or trying to draw others into yourself. So it is more than just envy, it is more than jealousy. It is ambitious jealousy, or you could say it is realistic jealousy. You do not just become jealous of a person, but you would like to compete with them. So it is a very practical jealousy, an extremely ambitious kind of jealousy.

The whole process, in this case, is always one of grasping, holding on to something, holding on to high ideals. Of course, spiritually it is holding on to the higher spiritual truths of those who have achieved. And often, people who are in this realm of human beings have visions or identify themselves with Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, or whomever. Historical characters mean a tremendous amount to you because they have achieved something. They have magnetized everything that you can possibly think of—fame and power. If they wanted to become rich, they could become so, because they have such tremendous influence over other people. Spiritually you would like to be someone like that. You have a competitive attitude toward them: you do not necessarily want to become better than them, but you would at least like to match them. And people also have visions in which they identify themselves with great politicians, great statesmen, great poets, great painters, great musicians, great scientists, and so on.

Such a competitive attitude of the human realm is overwhelming. It seems that the whole process of approaching things from that angle is based on magnetizing. That is why the human realm stresses the idea of knowledge and learning, education, collecting a wealth of wisdom of all kinds—scientific, philosophical, or what have you. It is based on intellect. The human realm is the highest point of the six realms of the world. The human realm has the greatest potential or quality of achieving, or of creating a monument of the rest of the six realms. One of the ideals of materialistic society, ambitious society, is to try to create the greatest, or the biggest, or the largest, or the longest, historical monument. Trying to break records of samsaric speed. That kind of heroic approach is based on magnetizing.

Such a heroic approach is also based on fascination, because you

encounter such intellectual understanding, meeting with remarkable people. It is also based on self-consciousness, of course, as to what you do not possess. When you hear that somebody else possesses something, you regard yourself as insignificant; when you hear that somebody is significant, that impresses you. That competitiveness is the fixed state of the human realm. It is based on continual thought process which will never end because there is so much stuff going on in your mind as a result of collecting so many things, and as a result of so many plans to be made.

The extreme state of the human realm is that you are stuck in an absolute traffic jam of discursive thoughts. It is extremely busy. There is no end to it. One cannot really relate with any kind of learning or develop anything at all. Constantly all kinds of stuff churn out. All kinds of ideas and plans and hallucinations and dreams churn out constantly. It is quite different from the realm of the gods, where you are completely absorbed in a blissful state and you have a kind of self-snug satisfaction. In the case of the jealous gods also, you are completely drunk on extreme comparative mentality; you are stuck there. There seem to be fewer possibilities of thought process happening, because your experiences are so strong and they overpower you; you are hypnotized by that state. In the case of the human realm, there seems to be much more thought process happening constantly. The thinking process takes place much more actively. The intellectual or logical mind becomes so powerful that one is completely overwhelmed by all kinds of possibilities of magnetizing new things. You are trying to get hold of new situations and new ideas, along with all kinds of strategies that you might employ, as well as case histories, as well as quotations from the books you have read, as well as the overwhelming incidents that have happened in your life. The things recorded in your subconscious begin to play back constantly all the time, much more so than in other realms. So it is a very intelligent realm and extremely busy and extremely dissatisfied at the same time.

The human realm seems to have less pride than any of the other realms. If you are stuck in the other realms, you begin to find that your realm is some kind of occupation, you can hang on to it, and you begin to get satisfied with it; whereas in the case of the human realm, there is no satisfaction. There is constant searching, constant looking for a new situation to improve on the given situation.

Of course, the human realm also has the six bardo qualities in it: the fantasy or dreamlike quality, the quality of continuously giving birth, death, absorption, as well as the gap in which you can experience the clear light. All these experiences are happening simultaneously, which provides more varieties of speeding, more possible ways of speeding.

On the one hand, the human realm seems to be a rather intelligent situation. At the same time, it is the realm which is the least enjoyable, because suffering is not regarded as an occupation in the human realm, but suffering is a way of challenging yourself. So a constant reminder or ambition is created from the suffering.

Student: Do all six realms have corresponding buddha families?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. The god realm and the animal realm are both associated with the buddha family. The jealous god realm is associated with the karma family, the human realm with the padma family, the hungry ghost realm with the ratna family, and the hell realm with the vajra family.

Student: Rinpoche, what about the extreme version? You say that each one of these realms could be considered a psychotic state. What is the extreme of the human realm? This sounds like a very normal state you're describing.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The extreme case is speed, trying to catch your own tail. You are so fast that you begin to see your own behind.

Student: Rinpoche, is depression associated with any one of the realms in particular?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If depression is connected with any of the realms, it seems to be the human realm in particular. As I've already mentioned, the least satisfied realm is the human realm, because it is intellectually highly strung and everything is regarded as tentative. There is the possibility of getting something, but one is not quite certain whether one is really getting it or not. There is a continual sense of failure all the time. So it seems that depression is dominant in the human realm.

Student: Rinpoche, while you were talking, I was wondering whether there is anything statistical about this, whether in mankind in general you find rather more persons in one particular realm than the others, or

whether it is pretty evenly split up? Is this human realm that you're describing one in which more people tend to fall, or would it be some other?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you cannot know percentages as such. But it seems that the human realm is colored by all kinds of other situations, such as the realm of hell, or the hungry ghost or jealous god realms. It seems that generally there are more people involved in the other five realms than in the standard human realm. That is also associated with the cultural situation of the moment, the political situation of the moment.

S: And how about the presentation of ideas? Yours is one particular form of presentation; do you find that it seems to appeal to one type more than others?

TR: Well, that seems to be applicable to all of them. I mean, people have different makeups, as we have been talking about, they possess different buddha natures and they have their own way of viewing or understanding, in terms of magnetizing or enriching or whatever. So the presentation does not make any difference, but the presentation is sort of a neutral situation. It is there, and they adopt it according to their style. It is like the way we eat food, for instance. Some people eat food for taste, some people eat food because they are hungry, some people eat food because they feel it is part of their occupation of escape. There are all kinds of styles. There may be a hundred people in the audience watching a cinema, and each person would have a different way of regarding that particular movie: it could be seen as fascination or entertainment or expectation or educational. There are all kinds of ways of viewing it. It is the same thing with any situation. Presenting teaching is also the same; it is a very neutral thing. How people take it will vary according to how they sense that neutral situation according to their own state of being.

Student: Rinpoche, is one way of getting out of this realm, or one problem of this realm, not identifying with yourself, not seeing external qualities in yourself?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think the attitude regarded as applicable to all of the realms is that if you are able to see situations clearly as they are—without being colored by what you want to see, what you like to see, what would be helpful for you to see, but just things as they are, directly

and simply—then you begin to lose any ambition involved in the different realms of the world. Each realm has its own style of ambition, so stepping out is the absence of ambition, which is not colored by present confusion.

Student: Rinpoche, what would be the quality of the buddha of this realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The buddha of the human realm is a buddha with a begging bowl. It represents the mentality of poverty, which is the largest concern of the human realm. In order to relate with poverty, you have to speak the language of poverty. But by carrying a begging bowl, in fact, it is as though you always have something to put things into. In other words, the ultimate mentality of poverty is also the mentality of richness at the same time. Whenever situations need to be created you can create them, and you get it. You are in command of the whole situation. So that is extremely wealthy.

Student: Rinpoche, would one's predominant buddha family have an affinity to a particular mental aberration of the six realms of existence? Would karma people have a greater psychological tendency to pick up the aberration of the asuras?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Not necessarily. You have your basic character, but at the same time, the different experiences of the different realms are purely instigated from your current situation. You may use the same style as the particular buddha family you belong to, but that style could be put into practice from a different state of being at the same time—always.

S: You said the realm of the gods was basically buddha family. Would it be possible to relate to that in a vajra way?

TR: Definitely, yes. There could also be the padma quality of magnetizing, as well as all kinds of other things.

Student: For a person who has not yet achieved a simple awareness of things as they are, and who has this human quality of intellect and wants to understand things—for him it takes a certain effort, just sitting here and listening to you, a certain effort to concentrate, to hear and understand what you are saying. And that effort seems to be a kind of clinging, a kind of magnetism. Now, is there something that such a per-

son can do directly in his realm of intellect to improve the situation, or can it only be done through the whole process of meditation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, when you talk about improving the situation, you are talking about a confusing topic. You have the basic idea of improving the situation, but you haven't gotten to the point of the cause and effect of the improvement. Whether it should come from there or here is uncertain. So in order really to deal with situations, you have to start methodically, organically. That is to say, you need to know whether the situation is the hang-up, or the person who is experiencing the situation is the hang-up, or the style of experiencing the situation is the hang-up. That is very subtle and very, very delicate. It seems that in order to relate with a situation, you first have to let the inhibitions come through—the hidden qualities, the masked qualities, or the ambitious qualities. So the whole thing begins with not regarding apparent hang-up–type situations as hang-ups, but letting them be as they are, and letting further hang-ups come through. Then the hang-up coming through shows us its direction: whether it is really coming from here or there becomes quite obvious at some point. So it has to be a very individualistic style, a very personal style.

Student: What is the point or circumstance at which a person in the human realm is going to change into another realm? What leads up to that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Doubt, uncertainty—which requires a circumstance of double take. You see one situation, you are just about to get into it; then you doubt, and you look again. You are not speeding at that moment. In the process of your double take, you cannot speed anymore because you are stopping, you are looking back again.

S: Which way is it more likely for the doubt to lead?

TR: To all of the other realms, any of the rest. It doesn't really matter. You could go up and down the realms or come back again. Doubt is a way of reducing the intensity of the human realm.

S: Would it be good to try to create the doubt, or maybe to try and do a purposeful double take?

TR: I don't think so. It wouldn't be honest. If you know that you are doing that, therefore, you've got yourself.

S: How about other people, then?

TR: There again it is the same problem, if it is deliberate.

Student: Doesn't meditation create doubt? You could say that is the purpose of meditation or at least one of the outcomes.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Obviously, yes.

S: So, in a sense the question could be, the answer could be, to meditate.

TR: Not just in order to create doubt. You just meditate for the sake of meditating. You just do it. Then all kinds of disappointment comes out of the meditation.

S: Isn't it true that anybody who goes into meditation goes in for some purpose?

TR: You start with some purpose, definitely. But once you are in that meditative state, you do not have to dwell on that purpose at all. You forget why you're meditating. Altogether you are completely involved with the technique or the practice.

Student: It sounds as if the human realm is the only realm we talked about.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is why it has been said that the human realm is the land of karma. It has a kind of mentality or intelligence which the other realms do not possess. Either they are too intelligent, like the realm of the gods and the asura realm, which are highly stuck, completely involved with their own scene; or else they are like the animal and the hungry ghost realms, in which things are very down, oppressive, and there is no chance of looking at it. So the human realm is the most painful and irritating realm. Therefore, it is more fertile.

Student: Is the doubt that you feel in the human realm the doubt that you can ever achieve your ideal? Is this the doubt that you are talking about? I'm not sure about the doubt that takes you out of the human realm.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is doubt as to whether your occupation is valid or not, whether it is going to help you or harm you, and also doubt as to who is putting this into practice. The first doubt is doubt of the goal, the effort, or the ambition; you are uncertain whether your ambition to put things into practice is the right one or not. The second doubt is the doubt as to who is actually putting this into practice. You are beginning to develop a sense of uncertainty as to the existence of ego or not. That

kind of doubt is a secondary one. It is a very profound one, that second type of doubt.

Student: In the classification system we had, as we travel through the bardos, we established that leaving one and entering another is the spot to leave that game. On another level, you also said that there is this birth-death continuum. I'm wondering, does that have spaces in it as well, in going from a dream state to a birth state or something like that? I'm wondering how they intersect.

Trungpa Rinpoche: These are the styles of our daily habitual pattern. For instance, in our living situation we sleep and we get up and we walk and we wash and we eat food. The situation of our existing in a realm is based on a dreamlike quality, birth, death, and gaps of all kinds.

S: So there are gaps between those?

TR: Yes, there are gaps between one occupation and another occupation.

S: So in the passage between one and the other, there are also points where we can get a flash of the whole situation.

TR: Until the intensity becomes overwhelming. The intensity becomes overwhelming, and there is a sense of irritating space where you feel you have to get on to the next one. That could possibly be a problem. Otherwise, there are obvious gaps. But those obvious gaps could become irritating, so much so that we immediately have to latch on to another gap, another topic, so to speak.

S: That's the problem with all spaces.

TR: Yes, yes.

Student: You said that the other realms happen simultaneously in the human realm. Does that mean that during each moment all the realms are happening at the same time, or are they independent?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It could be said that they happen in all kinds of ways, either simultaneously or in an intensified situation of one realm at a time. That depends on how much you collect different means to maintain your ego. If you have to intensify your jealousy as well as intensifying your grasp at the same time, you are in both realms, the human realm as well as the realm of the jealous gods. And if you find that is not efficient enough, sufficient enough, then you pick up other realms to help as auxiliary ways of maintaining your ego. So that could also

happen. I mean, there is really no regulation of any kind. It is not a fixed thing, it could happen in all kinds of ways.

S: Are they present together or consecutively?

TR: Both.

Student: Rinpoche, if a young child and his parents fall into different realms, is he hopelessly pulled into their realm, so in a sense he reflects back to you what realm you as a parent might be in?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends on how much the child has developed a sense of himself as an independent concept. I mean, up to that point, it is possible to be pulled in in that way. Your pet animals, for instance, could be pulled into the same scene as well. That is exactly what happens when you have a national leader who is in one of the realms—the whole nation becomes part of that realm.

Student: Do all of the realms develop out of each other and have a common root?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The one common root is the bewilderment of ego, uncertainty. You feel you are losing ground unless you do something, so the obvious next move is to try to get into one of those realms.

Student: Rinpoche, you said that the six realms can contain the bardo state as well as the gap? Is that gap the same as dharmadhatu?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. Dharmadhatu seems to be the instigator of all the problems. At the same time, it provides the basic space for all of them as well as for the enlightened state. It is all-pervading; that is why it is all-pervading.

Student: Rinpoche, you spoke of this realm as being less inherently prideful than some of the others. Yet it seems to be extremely critical, and we are generally negative toward the majority of people around us in the human realm. Can you explain that problem a little further? You said that someone in the human realm is generally very critical of everyone who doesn't seem to match his or her style; and there are a smaller number of people who seem extremely attractive and whom one would like to magnetize. Yet you say that this realm is less involved with pride than the others.

Trungpa Rinpoche: There is less pride in the sense of thinking you have

found a definite occupation. For instance, in the case of the realm of the gods, you can dwell on your sense of absorption; and in the case of the asuras, you also have a sense of occupation, you are living on jealousy. It seems that the human realm hasn't found a fixed, definite occupation, except trying to magnetize whatever is available around you. But that is a very, very scattered situation. The situations around you are very unpredictable. They just present themselves, and you try to get hold of them, but at the same time they go on constantly. So your mind is constantly shifting between expectations of the future and memories of the past. That creates projections. So you haven't found a really definite occupation as such. That is why particularly the human realm has the possibility of receiving a teacher and being able to hear the teachings. Because you are not fixed on definite solid ground, you do not become deaf and dumb like the other realms. In a sense, it is a more open situation.

Student: Is the clear light state a desirable state to be in, in the human realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends on what you mean by desirable. It is not a particularly comfortable situation in the ordinary sense, but it is definitely a non-ego state. The clear light experience begins with deprivation: you have lost your occupation. A certain amount of fear begins because you do not have anything to hang on to. It is complete all-pervading space, everywhere, irritating.

S: So that is how it differs from, let's say, the gap—it has an irritating quality to it?

TR: Right, yes, precisely. It is the irritating quality of the gap. You have seen the clear light state, but you are not in it properly. You just perceive a sense of clear light, rather than being in it. So clear light is the sense of desolation of complete open space. You have nothing to hang on to. Therefore, your automatic reaction, instead of getting into it, is to try to latch on to another thing that you can hang on to, which is one of the realms.

Student: You said there was a choice in the human realm; but in the Allenspark bardo seminar you proved that there was no choice.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is saying the same thing in a sense. There is no real choice; you have to accept the given situation. But if you accept

the given situation, then that could be said to be a choice: because you have accepted the choicelessness of that moment, you can get on to the next situation. It is up to you whether you get into it or not.

S: How is that particular to the human realm?

TR: Because the human realm has less sense of fixed occupation. It is uncertain, extremely uncertain, and filled with all kinds of anxieties, possible failures, possibilities of all kinds.

Student: If you have a sense of the clear light experience, how do you go from that point to dwelling in the clear light instead of running away from it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, you see, that is the thing: you cannot dwell on clear light. That is what I mean by losing your handle, something to hang on to. Usually when you try to get into some psychological state, you could dwell on it, you could keep it up. But in terms of clear light experience, there is nothing to dwell on—which is an extremely foreign idea to the ego. The whole idea is that if you would like to get into that state, you have to give up all hope of getting somewhere or attaining something. You have to give up hopes and fears of all kinds.

S: If you got to the point where you gave up all hope of getting away from the sense of clear light, would that be the same thing as giving it up?

TR: That is where clear light becomes part of you. If you disown the clear light, you become part of it.

Student: But there is a separation, or a difference, between clear light and the bodhisattva's state. The clear light is still a bardo state, but you described the bodhisattva's state of giving up as a desirelessness and non-grasping.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, the style of the bodhisattva path is the same, but the clear light experience is a very concentrated state. There is automatically something vivid and threatening. In the case of the bodhisattva ideal of giving up attaining enlightenment, it is more giving up as a path rather than as the full experience.

S: So in the clear light state there is still something to be irritated? You are still going in there with something?

TR: At the beginning, yes. You see, in order to merge two into one, you have to have two to begin with, as compared with one. Then the

second one ceases to exist as an independent entity, you get into oneness. So you have to have two things happening in order to become one.

S: If that goes all the way, then there's only one?

TR: There is only one, yes—which is that you have nothing to hang on to. In the case of bodhisattva experience, there is still something to hang on to—which is the occupation of the bodhisattva. Bodhisattva activity is spontaneous action without purpose, without any idea of attaining enlightenment—but it is still an expression of duality. It is an occupation with no goal, no attitude.

S: You can have a goalless occupation?

TR: You could, yes. That is a very healthy situation for the bodhisattva; he or she does not experience any disappointment anymore.

S: But by definition, the bodhisattva is one who vows to renounce nirvana until all sentient beings are enlightened.

TR: That's right, yes.

S: That is not a goal?

TR: No, because all sentient beings are limitless.

Student: Rinpoche, you described the embryonic situation leading to the breakdown of the realm of the gods as hope becoming fear and fear becoming hope; and in the asuras, the question beginning to become, "Who's defending whom?" What is the direction of the breakdown of the human realm and the possibility of coming to the gap?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose it is the repetitiousness of familiar situations being re-created constantly. At some stage you begin to lose heart and the whole thing becomes too familiar, including your games of maintaining yourself. It becomes too repetitious. That automatically invites depression as well, in the human realm. So it is sort of like familiarity breeding contempt.

Student: Does the bodhisattva path ever cease to be an occupation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, and at that point, the bodhisattva becomes part of the occupation. His action becomes part of the occupation—his whole being. He doesn't have to occupy himself with anything at all. He just does it.

Student: Rinpoche, you spoke about the accommodation of change. Would that have to be the practice of letting go of emotions?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes.

S: And there is the possibility of change to the degree that one is able to give up?

TR: It is not a question of giving up, but it is a question of seeing beyond; it is a question of seeing that there is no direction anymore, rather than that there is no direction. The one who experiences direction does not have any interest anymore, so that kind of direction is redundant.

Student: Rinpoche, I'm not exactly clear on the clear light and the bodhisattva. When you attain the clear light state, do you naturally become a bodhisattva?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Clear light seems to be the meditative state of a bodhisattva, and the bodhisattva's idea of giving up is the path, or the practice, of a bodhisattva. You see, meditative experience could be said to be clear light; it does not have any aim, object, or goal, because you become part of the clear light. But that does not become the permanent experience of bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas flash back on the clear light constantly, but they still have to occupy themselves with something.

S: So the clear light is one aspect of the bodhisattva's being?

TR: Yes. And it has different intensities at different stages of the path. At the advanced stages of the bodhisattva path the clear light experience becomes more frequent—until you reach the tenth. In the beginning, it is less frequent.

S: In the tenth stage, what is the clear light experience?

TR: It is described in the books as being like visions seen in full moon-light: it is not as clear as the sunlight, as buddha, but it is relatively clear.

Student: It was a surprise when I found out that the realm of the gods wasn't where salvation was. Where does salvation come in?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you could talk about salvation, it seems that it is when there is no direction, the end of ambition, which is when you become completely one with your experience. Knowledge becomes one with wisdom, which is called buddhahood, or the awakened state of mind. You realize that you never needed to make the journey at all, because the journey is there already and the goal is there already. It is not so much that you are gaining something; it is not so much that you are

achieving liberation, but it is more that you realize liberation is there and that you needn't have sought for it. That is the precise definition of *jnana,* which is a Sanskrit word meaning "wisdom." *Jnana* means complete oneness with your experience; you do not relate with the experiencer as such at all.

FIVE

The Animal Realm

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE different realms should follow the qualities of personality, the way or style in which individuals handle themselves—their styles of talking, the way they make telephone calls, the way they write letters, the way they type letters out, the way they read, the way they handle their eating, the way they sleep. Everybody tends to develop a style which is peculiar to them; everybody tends to develop their own kind of composure. At the same time, they are generally unaware of that situation and of the way they handle themselves. That sense of style even goes to the extent that if we are nervous or self-conscious, we still have our style of how to be self-conscious, which is quite unique from individual to individual. We may smile because we are self-conscious, or we may try to be frozen or aggressive or polite, or whatever. There is always some kind of style we are trying to follow. And we follow these styles, or ways of handling ourselves, continuously—not only in domestic situations, but also spiritually. People have their own style of meditating, their own style of trying to be good, trying to be religious, which has a very definite flavor.

In many situations, a person's particular style, or way of handling themselves, is uncertain or unknown to them. Often people become irritated when they hear their recorded voice or see videotapes or movies of themselves. If they observe themselves in that way, a lot of people find it extremely shocking. Even photographs are extremely shocking because you carry your own style in them. You may think you are better than you are or worse than you are, but when you see pictures of

yourself you begin to get another point of view altogether. It is as though somebody else is seeing your style, which is extremely alien. Generally we do not like to see somebody else's point of view of ourselves. We don't like that, we find it irritating, embarrassing.

The realm that we are going to talk about today is highly connected with that style of handling our life situation. Even self-conscious people have particular characteristics that they fail to experience as though somebody else were watching or listening to them. Instead, a kind of instinct drives them into a particular aim, object, or goal—which is the animal realm. This has nothing to do with actually being reborn as an animal as such; it is the animal quality in this particular experience of our life.

Bearing that in mind, we could relate with that kind of animal instinct in ourselves in which everybody is involved with such serious games. Seriousness, in this case, does not necessarily mean the absence of a sense of humor. Even a sense of humor could be serious at this point. Self-consciously trying to create a friendly environment, a person could crack jokes or try to be funny or intimate or clever. That kind of sense of humor still has animal instinct, animal qualities. The reason seriousness is associated with the animal realm and that generally animals are viewed as symbolic representations of this particular realm is that animals don't smile or laugh, they just behave. They may play, but it is very unusual for animals actually to laugh. They might make friendly noises, or they might make certain gestures of friendliness, but somehow the subtleties of a sense of humor do not seem to exist in the animal realm. So this whole way of handing ourselves is related with the animal realm, including the attempted sense of humor in which we try to present a solemn situation as humorous.

The animal quality is one of purely looking directly ahead, as if we had blinkers. We look straight directly ahead, never looking right or left, very sincerely. We are just trying to reach the next available situation, all the time trying. Again, we are trying to grasp in a slightly different way, trying to be in a slightly different way, trying to demand that situations be in accordance with our expectations. Intelligence still plays an important part, but at the same time, there is this dumb quality, the ignorant quality of the animal realm.

The animal realm is associated with ignorance. It belongs to the same category as the realm of the gods, in terms of its other characteristic

buddha family. That is, animals have buddha-family qualities. They prefer to play deaf and dumb. They prefer to follow the given games that are available rather than looking at them or seeing them as they are. You might look at those games, or you might manipulate how to perceive such games, but at the same time you just follow along, you just continue to follow your instinct. When you have some hidden or secret wish, you would like to put that into practice. For instance, when there is irritation, you just put forward the irritation, no matter whether the irritation is going to hurt somebody or damage the creative situation or not. That does not seem to be a concern of the animal realm. You just go out and pursue whatever is available, and if the next situation comes up, you just take advantage of that as well and pursue it. It is like the story of the otter. An otter, who already has his prey of fish in his mouth, swims through the water. Suddenly he sees another fish swimming, a bigger, fatter one. He forgets that he already has a fish in his mouth, and he jumps the other fish—but the first fish slips away. So he loses both the first and the second fish. So if situations are unskillfully presented or unskillfully seen, then automatically you are going to meet with disappointment.

Generally, the quality of ignorance in the animal realm is quite different from primordial ignorance, or basic bewilderment. This kind of ignorance is dead honest and serious, which brings us further confusion or ignorance. You have a certain style of relating with yourself, and you refuse to see that style from another point of view. You completely ignore the whole thing. If somebody happens to attack you or challenge your clumsiness, your unskillful way of handling the situation, quite possibly you will find a way of justifying yourself. Or at least that is the approach taught in the schools: try to find your own logic to prove yourself and learn how to be self-respectable. Therefore, whatever you do is regarded as a self-respectable situation because you have only one way to go, which is to be serious and honest with yourself—in the pejorative sense. This has nothing to do with the truth at all. Actually, we don't care whether it is true or false. The false is seen as also true, and the truth is seen as something very serious. So generally falsehood is also extremely encouraging and something to be worthy of, proud of, in terms of animal realm. If you are attacked, challenged, or criticized, you automatically find an answer, in a very clever way.

The ignorance of the animal realm is not stupid at all. It is extremely

clever. But it is still ignorance, in the sense that you don't see the perspective or the environment around you, but you only see one situation, one goal, aim, and object. You try to mold the situation in accordance with your desire or your demand. And all kinds of excuses need to be put into the situation in order to prove that what you are doing is the right thing. They are not very difficult to find: automatically the cunning quality of the ignorance finds its own way of associating with such falsehood, whatever it may be. And at that point, even you yourself don't regard it as falsehood. That is the very interesting point about it. Whenever there is a falseness or some devious way of relating with things, you begin by convincing yourself that it is the right thing. And having convinced yourself, having developed this very narrow vision, then you relate with other people, other situations, and try to convert them to your style, to your original desire. So the animal realm seems to be extremely stubborn, but this stubbornness also has a sophisticated quality to it. It is not clumsy or stupid at all. It is a way of defending oneself and maintaining this animal realm. On the whole, the animal realm is without a sense of humor of any kind. The ultimate sense of humor in this case is relating with situations freely in their full absurdity. In other words, a sense of humor, in its true nature, is seeing things clearly, including their falsehood, without blinkers, without barriers. A sense of humor could be seen as a general way of opening or seeing with panoramic vision, rather than as something to relieve your tension or pressure. As long as a sense of humor is regarded, or used as, a way of relieving pressure or self-consciousness, it is an extremely serious thing. It ceases to be a sense of humor at that point. Instead it seems to be looking for another pair of crutches.

The final crescendo of the animal realm seems to be when we try to grope our way into the next situation constantly, trying to fulfill our desires or longings, our hidden and secret wishes. We try to put that into practice quite seriously, quite sincerely, honestly, and directly. In the traditional symbolism, the animal realm—this direct and extremely mean way of relating with the apparent phenomenal world of one's projections—is symbolized by the pig. The idea behind that is that the pig supposedly does not look to the right or the left or turn around, but it just sniffs along, and whatever comes in front of its nose it consumes. It goes on and on and on, without any kind of discrimination, a very sincere pig.

Often we find ourselves identified with such an image. It doesn't matter what topic or what particular situation we are dealing with. We may be dealing with all kinds of extremely sophisticated topics and intellectual concepts of the highest standard—but still, our style of working with that sophisticated world is that of a pig. It does not matter whether the pig eats beautiful, fantastic, expensive sweets, or whether the pig eats garbage and shit. Somehow, the criterion for being a pig is not based only on what the pig eats, but it is based on its style, how the pig handles itself in the process of eating.

Such an animal-realm approach could be related with all kind of situations: domestic, materialistic, or spiritual. There seems to be a crescendo of becoming completely more and more trapped. There is no way of steering to the right or the left because you are involved with such situations constantly, all the time, throughout your daily life. You are not able to look at yourself, you are unable to relate with the mirroring quality of the realms and of your life. You refuse to acknowledge that there are such things as mirrors. Mirrors that reflect your own projections do exist, but you do not relate with that at all. So the whole daily living situation—getting up in the morning, having breakfast and then doing odd things, having lunch and then also doing all kinds of things that you are interested in, eating dinner and going to sleep—goes on and on in that way. The things you put into those situations could be at an extremely high level of intelligence, the subject that you're dealing with could contain tremendous wisdom—but the style in which you handle yourself happens to be that of an animal. There is no sense of humor. There is no way of being willing to surrender, willing to open, or willing to give, at all. There is constant demand. If one thing fails, you are disappointed and you try to embark on another thing. We do this constantly, getting into one subject after another.

In discussing a similar situation, we used the analogy of a tank. A tank just rolls along, crushing everything. If there is a roadblock, the tank just goes through it with the appropriate sidetracks. It can go through buildings or through walls. It doesn't really matter whether you go through people or through objects. You just roll along. That seems to be the pig quality of the animal realm. And the animal realm seems to be one of the biggest—or *the* biggest and most outstanding—realms. We are often in that realm—to say the least.

Student: Would one see a kind of naiveté in a person like that? They seem to be unaware or unconscious of their situation. It doesn't seem as if a person in the animal realm would have a panoramic view.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes, definitely. You have developed your own style of achieving things: either playing games of one-upmanship or playing games of conning other people in order to achieve your wishful desires. There is a constant simple-minded quality. Those games are known only to you; therefore you just do it, whether it works or not. If it doesn't work, then you get into the next situation.

Student: You were portraying the animal realm in terms of the stubbornness of going forward unthinkingly. But there's also the stubbornness which we speak of as "stubborn as a mule," which is that whatever way somebody is trying to pull you, you pull in the opposite way, sort of passive resistance. Is this kind of stubbornness also part of the animal realm, or is it something different?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think that is part of the whole thing, being stubborn as a mule. The mule doesn't want to go; therefore, that is his direction. He is still going forward in his way, whether you think it is a different way or not.

S: But when I find myself in this kind of stubbornness, it's not always that I have my own direction. When I get obstinate, I'm going to go in the opposite direction of whatever direction somebody else is trying to push me. So it's not that I have my own direction and therefore I am going forward. I just feel myself in a reverse gear against whatever pull exists.

TR: Well, that is saying the same thing, in a way. Whenever there is an obstacle that you are going through, you fight that obstacle in accordance with your wishes. Obstacles provide you with a new way of being stubborn constantly. That means you also develop an attitude of boycotting any situation presented to you; you have your own, so to speak, free will, or vision. That kind of vision is there all the time. So you cannot say that you are completely unprepared for new obstacles, but you have some definite logic going on there.

Student: Does the animal realm have a quality of paranoia?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you could have extreme paranoia in the animal realm. You experience the paranoia of not being able to achieve

what you want, in accord with the ideal situation you would like to see. Therefore, the only way of achieving your ideal goal is to try to push further, as much as you can. So paranoia creates stubbornness at this point.

S: Rinpoche, how does this paranoia differ or compare with the paranoia in the asura state?

TR: In the asura state there is a tendency to try to fill all the gaps constantly. It is not so much going forward in the asura state; instead there is a quality of spreading. You look for security by trying to spread all over the situation and control it by extending yourself in terms of the relative logic of jealousy, envy. The animal realm is not so much concerned with conquering, but it is very simple-minded and very monastic—if one could use such a word. You would like to achieve your aim and object, and you just go along with that. We could say it is austerity.

Student: Rinpoche, what is the buddha family associated with this realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that it belongs to the central family, the buddha family, the same as the realm of the gods. It is extreme earthiness, extreme nonparticipating in any frivolous situation trying to con you, but just going straight. It is very earthy, like a rock rolling down from a steep mountain; you are just willing to go straight through.

Student: Rinpoche, there seems to be something unavoidable about the cycle of this realm. I mean, you do have to make some sort of decision about style: you're not going to eat one way; you are going to eat another way. You have to make a choice. But it seems as if you are always in this realm; there doesn't seem to be any escape. In that way it seems different than the other realms.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The choice of style is largely based on the particular obstacle. It is like the way animals handle their bodies as they are walking across the countryside. If somebody is chasing you, and if the person who is chasing you cannot climb up, you climb up. It is not necessarily intelligent, but it is following the physical setup of your existence. You do it. If you are a bird and if some other animal without wings chases you, you just fly. That is not particularly a cunning quality of birds at all. You haven't thought that up; it is not that you haven't come to that same

conclusion before, but you always come to that same conclusion. So in that way, obstacles provide a way of how to be stubborn.

Student: Rinpoche, what moves you out of the animal realm? What sets up the problem that moves you out of that realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it seems that there has to be some kind of distrust in the present given style of how you try to achieve your stubbornness. So you try to transcend your stubbornness. Again, as in the other realms, it seems that if there is a slight doubt that your stubbornness may not work, you might try different ways of handling your body, your earthy situation. In the iconographical symbolism, the buddha of the animal realm carries a book of scriptures in his hands. If you are going to read a book or read scriptures, you cannot have a stubborn mind, because you cannot rewrite the book on the spot. You have to attune yourself to the book and to what has already been written by somebody. So you have to give up your stubbornness if you are going to read that particular book. The image of buddha holding a book means that you have to tune yourself into new situations and try to learn from the other experiences that are being expressed, other ways of thinking—which is a way of stepping out of the stubbornness.

One point is that if a particular teaching is powerful and true, you cannot interpret, because it is so overwhelmingly true. I mean, if it is sunshiny and daytime, you cannot possibly deny that and try to prove it is nighttime, because it is obvious. There is light and the sun is shining and all the other qualities of daytime are obviously there, so you can't prove it to be nighttime or try to argue. That kind of teaching always seems to have relevance in dealing with your actual given situation, rather than viewing it as something that you can change. If the teaching is presented to you in its living quality, then you cannot deny that living quality.

Student: When you speak about following the necessities of your physical possibilities, it sounds as if there is a strong element in this realm of the wisdom of accepting what is inevitable.

Trungpa Rinpoche: There seem to be two ways of acceptance. One way is accepting that the obstacle is there and trying to tune yourself in accordance with the obstacle and present your stubbornness. That is one kind of acceptance, a tremendously faithful way of relating with the cur-

rent situation so that the current situation provides you with guidelines as to how to be stubborn. The other way seems to be the acceptance that fundamentally stubbornness doesn't work, and you have to learn to open somehow or other.

Student: Each time you expound on a realm automatically I think, "How the heck can we get out of this realm?" Can we be relaxed and notice that we're in a certain realm, and then do something about it? We could develop some strategy to kick us out of that realm immediately, but if we are in the animal realm, our strategy would probably be an animal strategy. So how can we get around this?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it depends on how advanced your plan is: if you are planning to pursue your same trip or if you could step out of this current problem of the inconvenience of being in the animal realm. In other words, you could be planning to try to step out of the animal realm so that you could become a super animal, so that you would have somewhere to pursue your previous occupation. Or else you could have a dead-end attitude, just wanting to get out of this particular realm and then letting things develop. That approach is usually referred to as very impractical by conventional society. According to conventional society you should not struggle; and if you are going to struggle, you must have an aim and object and goal. But on the other hand, it could be said to be the most practical way of looking at things at all, because you do not captivate yourself again and again by using the same ways.

Particularly in the animal realm, which is extremely involved with ignorance, the absurdity of yourself is not seen. Instead you take pride in it. You carry out your strategies as though nobody knows; as though nobody knows your tactics. At that point, particularly with the animal realm, there is a need for watching yourself being absurd or silly. It is the same analogy as we discussed earlier on: seeing your own photograph and hearing your own voice. Some kind of self-conscious, critical attitude to oneself is necessary, because the animal realm contains pride. That is why the animal realm and the realm of the gods have some common qualities. Both have survived on the pride of not watching yourself or what is happening at all, but just purely dwelling on succeeding constantly, on and on and on.

Student: When I look at an animal, a cat, or even a pig, it has that quality of directness that you described. It always strikes me as almost a

state of enlightenment, in the sense of being simply what it is. For instance, a cat always seems to respond precisely to the situation in its catlike way; I would even say the same thing about a pig. You say that an animal doesn't look around, that it has this blinder quality; but looking around implies a watcher, or an ego, so it seems almost as if animals are in an egoless state. It begins to sound very much like a state of enlightenment.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it doesn't necessarily have to be a cat or pig, but this kind of animal style is also in ourselves as well.

S: But it has this quality of simply being what we are.

TR: It is being what you are, but that is precisely the point—there are two ways of being what you are.

S: How does ego fit into the animal realm then?

TR: The ego of the animal realm is just simply being quite self-contained, satisfied in some sense in what you are. Therefore, whatever you do is to try to benefit yourself constantly; one doesn't even question it. In the case of enlightenment, you are being what you are, but you don't try to collect anything for yourself or try to benefit yourself or try to strengthen self-centered notions of any kind. The difference between the animal realm and the enlightenment state is that in the enlightened state acceptance and self-satisfaction take place in a spacious way, within open space, in a cosmic way; whereas the animal realm is centralized, and acceptance of its oneness happens in a centralized way. In exactly the same way, you could be extremely learned so you don't have to ask any more questions; but at the same time you could be extremely stupid so you can't even think of questions.

Student: To me, cats in particular have this enlightened quality. A cat sitting with his paws together and his tail curled around has a very similar quality to a buddha statue. And generally, cats in their activities have this really beautiful flowing quality.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, I don't particularly want to set out an anti-cat philosophy, but this way of just being what you are is quite common to all creatures or beings, so to speak: tigers, horses, birds, even wolves have their uniqueness. The way they handle themselves is miraculous—even centipedes, spiders—because they are being what they are. They can't help it; there is no alternative.

S: Do you mean that there's no space, in the sense that a human

being has space and can fill it up in alternative ways; whereas animals don't have such space?

TR: Animals do not have alternatives of any kind, suggestions of any kind. They just have to be what they are. By possession of luck, certain animals are loved because of their natural quality of being what they are, and we tend to interpret that quality as that they are specially being for us. But they are just being what they are. In the same sense, in Buddhist iconography, there are very few walking buddhas. Usually Buddha is depicted sitting—quite possibly in feline fashion, if you would like to see it that way. But at the same time, he has choices of all kinds. He just decided to sit and associate with the earth, which is an intelligent choice. In the case of animals, they have no choice. They are just there.

Take, for instance, the example of vows. In taking vows of all kinds, such as the Buddhist precepts—traditionally not to kill, not to steal, not to tell lies, and so on—human beings can take those precepts or vows because human beings have very cunning minds, and they also have the choice to kill or not to kill; whereas animals or other beings do not. For instance, only particular types of human beings can take the vow of celibacy. If you are a eunuch or neutered, you cannot take the vow of celibacy because you cannot break the rule anyway; it is physically impossible. So it seems that if you have the choice of either committing yourself or not, allowing yourself into the temptation or not allowing yourself into the temptation and finding another way of relating with it—that provides the basic background.

S: So, for example, the choice not to eat meat has that quality.

TR: Yes, automatically.

S: How about plants?

TR: There seem to be lots of them.

Student: You were talking about energy and space, and you said that animals have a self-centered image of space. Then you were talking about open space. In that regard, I was wondering why in Buddhist iconography the Buddha is always pictured in what seems to be a very centralized space. The imagery is always extremely centered. I mean, especially since you talk about animals having this very self-centered image of space instead of having a view of open space.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that pictures or representations of symbolical images reflect tremendously the artist who created them. Strangely

enough, they also reflect one culture to another culture. For instance, different types of buddha images were created in different Buddhist countries. Japanese buddhas always have this quality of being like warriors, like samurai, with little mustaches and sitting very tightly, with round shoulders, round backs. Also, looking at the ancient images created in different parts of India, you can tell in which part of India each image was made. Bengali buddhas, for instance, look kind of food-oriented; they have a certain facial expression, as though they just had a good meal. At the same time, buddhas created in Assam, in East India, are the most ancient images that you could find. Their facial expressions are very genteel, as though Buddha was a great scholar who knew everything, a very genteel professional look. So the imagery reflects the different styles from one country to another country.

Student: Rinpoche, what is the difference between moving forward one-pointedly in the style of the animal realm and the confidence that you like to see in your students, the acceptance of oneself? You say we have to accept ourselves, make friends with ourselves, and learn to trust ourselves as we are.

Trungpa Rinpoche: There seem to be two different styles of confidence: the security-minded confidence that whatever you do, you are going to achieve something out of it in order to benefit yourself; and confidence in the sense of carelessness, that you are allowing things to happen by themselves and not trying to secure situations of any kind. This second kind of confidence, where any associations to security do not apply any more, is the highest confidence. In fact, it ceases to be confidence at that point, because you don't have a target or criteria of any kind.

Student: You talked about doubt as being a way out of these realms. I don't see how to reconcile that with having confidence.

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you have a short glimpse of doubt as to your animal realm struggle, that this may not be the right style of pushing yourself; then at the same time, there is also confidence, that you don't need a comforter anymore. If the doubt is overwhelmingly powerful, you may find that security does not apply. Security is an important point for you—if you give up that sense of security, then you develop the con-

fidence that you do not need security anymore. In other words, there is a sort of trust in the doubt, and that in itself becomes a sense of security.

Student: Rinpoche, it sounds to me that seeking after personal comfort and removing yourself from a potentially harmful situation are both paranoid actions, motivated by ignorance. Is this correct?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Ignorance is the sense of having one particular aim and object and goal in mind. And that aim and object, that goal-mindedness, becomes extremely overwhelming, so you fail to see the situation around you. That seems to be the ignorance. Your mind is highly preoccupied with what you want, so you fail to see what is.

Student: Rinpoche, where is the opportunity or space to communicate with someone who is absolutely determined not to see what they're doing, and beyond that, is into justifying that they don't see?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is precisely the animal realm style of thinking: either subconsciously or consciously you ignore the whole situation, and deliberately make yourself dumb.

S: I can see that, but is there any place where you can communicate with somebody who is trapped in that situation?

TR: Well, one could try one's best to try to remind that person that such a situation is happening. Quite possibly, there may be a gap in their state of mind, their psychological state. Quite possibly they might hear the message if you are able to time it right. Otherwise, even your suggestion itself becomes reinforcement. So one has to be buddhalike, skillful—which is not impossible. It seems to be worth trying.

Student: Rinpoche, it almost seems that the animal realm has a universal quality in the sense that you find an occupation in any one of the realms. The way you cope with being a hungry ghost or you habitually cope with being an asura sounds like the animal realm, because you just try to plow through everything with hungry ghost mentality or hell mentality. Do you call that the hungry ghost realm with an animal realm flavor—or what?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The animal realm is in a sense less self-conscious, doing things with false conviction. The other realms seem to have some kind of intelligence, except for the realm of the gods, which doesn't have intelligence. The asura, human, hungry ghost, and hell realms seem to

have some kind of self-consciousness as well. That seems to be the only difference. Apart from that, the stubbornness of all these realms could be said to have animal qualities.

Student: With regard to the question that was asked earlier about the difference between stubbornness and confidence, would it be correct to say that if you are in fact working with yourself and working with the negative qualities that exist in any of these realms, such as the stubbornness of the animal realm—if you confronted it and transformed it and made it your friend, instead of a negative stubbornness, it could become a positive persistence which works for you?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes. Yes, definitely.

SIX

The Hungry Ghost and Hell Realms

WE SEEM TO HAVE two realms left: the hungry ghost realm and the hell realm. First we could discuss the hungry ghost realm. Like the other realms, the hungry ghost realm is tremendously applicable apropos situations we deal with ourselves. It could be related with the idea of hunger. The Tibetan word for the emotional state of the hungry ghost, *serna,* could be said to mean "meanness" or "lack of generosity." The literal meaning of *serna* is "yellow-nosed": *ser* means "yellow," *na* means "nose." In other words, it is an extremely sensitive nose, an outstanding nose. It is like traffic patrols, dressed up in fluorescent orange shirts to raise people's attention that there is something happening. It is that sniffy quality of a dog who is looking for something to eat. Even if he comes across a piece of shit, it is a delightful thing, because he has to come up with something.

In this realm it seems that the act of consuming is more important than what you are consuming; there is a disregard for what you consume. It is related with the ratna buddha family. There is a quality of trying to expand and develop. So the consumption is also based on a sense of expanding, becoming rich. In terms of the visual sense, hungry ghosts are presented as individuals having tiny mouths, thin necks and throats, gigantic stomachs, and skinny arms and legs. This image is usually connected with the struggle to get something through your mouth and swallow what you have consumed. It is extremely unsatisfying,

dissatisfying. Given the size of your belly, you cannot possibly be satisfied at all in filling your stomach.

The hungry ghost realm could be related with food, as symbolism, but it also could be related with the concept of food as grasping: grasping human friendship, company, material wealth, food, clothes, shelter, or whatever. The whole thing is related with the hunger that we seem to have—there is tremendous hunger involved. That hunger is extremely accurate and penetrating. You would like to consume whatever is available around you, but there is a slight sense of deprivation, as though you are not allowed to do that. At a subconscious level, there is a sense that you are not allowed to consume what you would like. You are trying to consume much more than you are meant to in terms of the size of your mouth and the size of your neck. It becomes totally impractical: what you are able to consume cannot fill you up, given the size of your belly. The preta, or hungry ghost, mentality at the spiritual level is that you would like to be entertained, because there is constant hunger. Whatever you hear is entertaining at the time, but it tends to become too familiar. So you are constantly looking for new ways of entertaining yourself—spiritually, philosophically, what have you. There is constant searching, a constant grasping quality.

Fundamentally, there is a sense of poverty, disregarding what you have. You are still poor. You are not able to keep up with your pretense of what you would like to be. Again, there is a sense of one-upmanship, which happens all the time. Whatever you have is regarded as part of your pride, part of your collection—but you would like to have something more than that. So you are constantly collecting all the time, on and on and on and on. And when the time comes that you cannot consume anymore—when you cannot receive anymore because you are dwelling on what you have already so that what you are receiving becomes too overwhelming—you begin to become deaf and dumb.

In other words, you concentrate so much on what you want, what you would like to receive, what you would like to achieve. So much concentration is imposed on your being, your intelligence. Because you want to listen so hard, you cannot hear anymore for the very fact that you want to listen or you want to receive. You want to learn so much that you cannot hear anymore because your ambition becomes an obstacle. At that point, the deaf and dumb quality of the hungry ghost level becomes extremely powerful. You see that other people can relate: they

can listen, they can understand, they can consume. Nostalgia becomes prominent: you wish that you were still hungry so that you could eat more. You wish that you felt poor, that you were deprived, so that you could take pleasure in consuming more and more, further and further. There is a sense of trying to return back to that original state of poverty, as much as you can. From that point of view, the mentality of poverty seems to be luxurious as far as the hungry ghosts are concerned. You would like to be able to consume as much as you can, in terms of knowledge, physical well-being, materialistic well-being, or what have you.

Finally, anything that happens in your life is regarded as something that you should consume, something that you should possess. If you begin to see beautiful autumn leaves falling down, they are regarded as your prey. You should captivate that: take photographs of it, paint a picture of it, write about it in your memoirs, how beautiful it was. Everything is regarded as something you should consume: if you hear somebody say a clever thing in one sentence in the course of your conversation, you should write it down, try to captivate that subtlety, that cleverness, that person's genius that they had such a beautiful thing to say. All the time, we are looking for something to catch in order to enrich ourselves. There is that mentality of complete poverty. No doubt, at the same time, if any delicious international meals are being cooked in certain restaurants, we would like to take part in them, eat them, taste them, have a new adventure. The flavor is more important than the value or the heaviness of the food, or that it could fill your belly.

Preta mentality is not so much a question of filling your belly. It is based on sensuality: taking the trouble of going out and buying something, walking into a store, picking out your particular brand of chocolate or wine, and bringing it back home. You are looking forward to doing that, to taking part in that. Your purchase could be consumed purely by you. If you share it with friends, you also could watch your friends enjoying your purchase. As you open the case or the bottle or the package, even the rattling of the paper unwrapping is extremely seductive. It is a luscious feeling, opening packages; the sound of Coke coming out of a bottle gives a sense of delightful hunger. It is something very beautiful. Self-consciously, we taste it, feel it, chew it, swallow it, and then finally, we actually manage to consume it—after that whole elaborate trip that we have gone through. Phew! Such an achievement! It is fantastic. We are able to bring a dream to life, it is a dream come true.

That applies to every living situation, not necessarily food alone. Constant hunger of all kinds happens. Intellectually, you feel your lack of some kind of encouragement. In all kinds of experiences, you feel a lack of something. You are deprived of something and you decide to pull up your socks and go and pursue it, to learn and study and hear those juicy intellectual answers or profound, spiritual, mystical words. You can hear and consume one idea after another idea. You try to recall them, try to make them solid and real. In case you want to or need to, you can recall them again and again in your life. Whenever you feel hunger, you can open your notebook with your notes, or you can open a particular book written by a great person who said very satisfying things in his books. You could satisfy and resatisfy constantly, again and again. In the course of your life, when you start to feel boredom or experience insomnia, you can always open your book, wherever you are. You can read your notebooks and ponder them constantly, or re-create a playback of the videotape of your mind as much as possible. That satisfies, seemingly.

But somehow, constantly playing back situations seems to become rather repetitive at a certain stage. We would like to re-create the situation again and again, possibly making the same journey. We may search for a new situation, or try to re-create meeting that particular friend or teacher. Another introduction is an exciting thing to do. And another journey to the restaurant or the supermarket or the delicatessen is not a bad idea. So we are constantly re-creating situations again and again, as much as possible. But sometimes the situation prevents us, we are running too fast. We may be able to re-create the journey for a certain amount of time, but at a certain stage, something prevents us. Either we do not have enough money or, when we try to plan something, something else happens: our child gets sick or our parents are dying or we have to attend some other situation. We have been holding back constantly. We realize that continual obstacles are coming at us; and that much more hunger begins to arise in us. We are still suspended in the realm of the hungry ghosts. The more we want something, the more we realize that we cannot get it. Constant holding back is involved.

In terms of the hungry ghost realm, there seem to be two types of hunger. The first is basic poverty, the feeling of the lack of fulfilling your desire. The second is that when you cannot fulfill your desire because you cannot consume any more, you wish that you could be somebody

else who could, somebody who *is* hungry and who could still consume. You are trying to become like one of those. You would like to take pleasure in hunger, like those other people. There is that competitiveness. That seems to be the basic quality of the hungry ghost realm.

As that builds up to an extreme, or bardo experience, you are not quite certain whether you are really hungry or whether you simply enjoy being hungry. If you are hungry, you can satisfy it. But at the same time, if you satisfy your hunger, you realize that you will not be able to enjoy your hunger anymore. You don't know whether you should suspend yourself in hunger or whether you should overdo it so that you could enjoy watching other people be hungry. That kind of extreme case begins to build up. There is uncertainty, actually, as to who is consuming and who is getting sick of consuming. The notion of poverty seems to be prominent.

Next we could discuss the realm of hell. Basically, hell seems to be related with aggression, ultimate aggression. That aggression is based on such perpetual hatred that you begin to lose the point. You are uncertain as to whom you are building up your aggression toward, or by whom that aggression is being built up. There is that continual process of uncertainty and confusion. Not only that, but you begin to build up a whole environment of aggression around you. That takes place constantly, all the time. Finally, even if you yourself feel slightly cool about your own anger, your own aggression, the atmosphere or environment around you begins to throw aggression back on you from outside. So a constant sense of aggression is involved. It is as if you were walking in a hot climate. You yourself might feel physically cool, but at the same time you begin to get this hot air coming at you constantly. So you cannot keep yourself cool all the time at all, because the environment creates heat. That kind of aggression is related with the extreme stuffiness or stubbornness of claustrophobia. The aggression does not seem to be your aggression, but the aggression seems to permeate the whole space around you. There is no space to breathe and there is no space to act. There is no space to move at all. The whole process becomes overwhelming.

Such aggression is so intense that if you kill somebody out of your aggression, you achieve just a fraction of the satisfaction of putting your aggression into practice. Somehow it doesn't help; the aggression is still lingering around you. If you kill yourself afterward, having murdered

someone already, that doesn't seem to help either, because you don't get the satisfaction of watching that you have achieved something. You could kill both your enemy and yourself by aggression, but still the aggression seems to be lingering around. There is some sense of satisfaction involved with the aggression, and that satisfaction seems to be the problem. In terms of committing suicide, you have to kill yourself—but the killer and that to be killed are still involved. Finally you realize that if you kill yourself, there's still the killer, so you haven't managed to murder yourself completely at all. It is extremely dissatisfying. One never knows who's killing whom, who could manage to eliminate whom at all, because the whole space is filled with aggression constantly.

It is like eating yourself inwardly: having eaten yourself inwardly, then the person who eats you still happens; so you continue to eat yourself inwardly and so on and so on. There is the constant onion skin of that person. If you eat the skin, then having eaten it already, there is another skin; next you have to eat that skin as well, *and* the next skin, and on and on and on. Finally, in the process of eating, you expand yourself. You get some kind of nourishment as a result of the consumption. You begin to get further strength because you have managed to eat your skin, and then you have to eat *that* skin. So constantly eating inward produces further expansion, skin of another type. So it goes on and on. It is like the analogy of a crocodile biting its own tail. Each time the crocodile bites his own tail, that crocodile is nourished, so the tail grows faster and faster and there is no end to it. That seems to be the ultimate understanding of aggression, that you can't really eliminate anything by aggression or kill anything by aggression. The more you kill, the more you are creating more situations to be killed. So a constantly growing aggression tends to develop.

Finally there is no space; the whole space has been completely solidified, without any gaps. There is no way to look back or do a double take on your actions at all. The whole space has been completely filled with aggression. It is outrageous aggression, but there is nothing to be outrageous about, because nobody is watching. You are completely consumed in your own environment. So aggression grows constantly, on and on and on. There is not even any pleasure in watching yourself or in creating a watcher to testify to your perceptions of killing and murdering and destroying. Nobody gives you a report. But at the same time, you constantly develop an overwhelming growth of aggression, as a result of the

destruction. As a result of the destruction, therefore, creation takes place constantly on and on.

Often the aggression of the hell realm is portrayed in the symbolism by both the sky and earth radiating red fire. The earth is completely reduced into red-hot iron, and the space is completely reduced into an environment of flame and fire. That is to say, there is no space to breathe the air of any coolness or coldness at all. Whatever you see around you is hot and intense, stuffy, extremely claustrophobic. So the hell realm is seen as a realm in which the more you put aggression outward to destroy the enemy and win over your opponent, that much reaction is created. When we talk about your enemy or opponent, it doesn't have to be an enemy in the literal sense. If you play a game of one-upmanship with somebody, it could be between friends—"I have experienced something much, much better than you did," or "I have heard something better than you did," "I already understand such-and-such a book better than you do," "I have heard the message much more subtly than you did." A constant battle goes on. It doesn't have to be a relationship between an enemy and yourself, it could be friends with friends. By putting out that kind of vibration, automatically the reaction afterward is extremely stuffy. Because you decided to overcrowd the space of the relationship, you are left with that stuffiness. So you have created your own realm in that sense, in human life.

That extreme case of one-upmanship is based on the feeling of being better, feeling that your speed is faster than somebody else's, your cunning quality is better than someone else's—your intelligence, your literary quality, your philosophical grasping, your understanding, your economical practicality, or whatever. You have a constant list of all these things, so that you can compare, "I am that, I am that," constantly. You have millions of subjects in your life to compare. Every life situation seems to be related with that sense of comparison. Everybody without fail has some genius, skill of some kind, including if they feel that they don't have any genius or skill of any kind—which in itself is genius. There are constant ingenious qualities that everybody has, and that automatically presents that much hell, that much aggression, to cover over the overcrowded situation.

You tend to overcrowd, and by doing so you are creating more hell, extending the hell realm. Basically, the hell realm is based on extending your territory to such a level that you are defending your territory

constantly. You are presenting one-upmanship all the time; at an unconscious or psychological level, you are trying to nurse or protect your territory as much as you can. That seems to be the process of the hell realm—we are throwing out flames, and radiation comes back to us constantly, on and on and on. There is no room to experience any spaciousness, any openness at all. And there is the constant effort to close up all kinds of space. That is also based on a cunning quality, as in the asura realm, where we talked about jealousy. It has that quality, but at the same time, the realm of hell is much more intense: you are actually putting forth your effort at a very practical level.

The hell realm can only be created by relationships. The asura realm is not necessarily based on relationships alone; it could be based on your own psychological hang-ups. But in the case of the realm of hell, there are constant relationships: you try to play games with something, and dealing with another individual bounces back on you constantly creating extreme claustrophobia, so finally there is no room to communicate at all. The only way to communicate is to try to re-create your paranoia or your anger, your aggression. You thought you managed to win the war by creating all kinds of one-upmanship, by laying all kinds of ego trips on somebody else. But the result is that having done that already, you don't get any response from the other person. Seemingly, you might think that you have achieved some response, but still you are faced with your own problem: your own negativity comes back, your own aggression comes back. That manages to fill all the space constantly, so it is sort of like a gas chamber.

You are re-creating things constantly. Whenever there is a life situation in which you feel lonesome or you don't have enough excitement, you get into another situation so that you can play that game again and again. It isn't so much that there's enjoyment in playing such a game, but the realm of hell seems to be purely the sense that there isn't enough security. All the time we feel cold. If there isn't any way of securing ourselves, we become bleak and too cold; therefore, we have to regenerate the fire. And in order to regenerate the fire, we constantly have to put out that effort to maintain ourselves. The bardo state connected with the hell realm seems to be based on playing that game constantly. One cannot even help playing such a game; one just finds oneself playing that particular game on and on, all the time.

Student: What kind of doubt is there in each of these realms? Where is the transition where possibly there is space to change into another realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In terms of the hungry ghost realm, it seems that transition is based on the uncertainty as to whether you will be able to maintain your constant consumption. At the hungry ghost level, there seems to be a certain amount of pain; but at the same time, that pain is largely based on not being able to achieve what you want to be. So there is always doubt as to whether you will be able to achieve what you want or not. It is like the gap between being hungry and deprived and because of that, wanting to consume more. Although you may realize that is not very good for you, at the same time, there is the tendency to collect more, to further enrich situations. So there is always a gap: uncertainty as to whether you could achieve what you want or not. There is always that kind of paranoia or fear. So it seems that in the hungry ghost realm, fear is one of the most outstanding situations you could relate with. That fear could be the way of stepping out of it.

In terms of the realm of hell, there is not much space in maintaining yourself as such. But at the same time the spacious quality in itself becomes perpetual creation. You have to function in some kind of space. You are consumed in that hot environment of claustrophobia constantly. You are creating that all the time. There is also, on the other hand, a tendency to relate with both hot and cold. You are aware of the textures of the elements. For instance, the buddha of the hell realm is depicted by a dark gray buddha holding fire and water in his hand. That flame and water in his hand represent a sense of texture as a way of stepping out of the hell realm. You are aware of the texture of the hotness or the texture of the coldness, whatever it is. If there is a sense of texture of all kinds, then there is also doubt at the same time.

In the realm of the hungry ghosts, the buddha of the hungry ghosts holds a container filled with all kinds of food. That food seems to be a way of confusing you or liberating you. It is confusing the issue of whether you want or whether you don't want. That is the gap you can catch.

Student: I don't see why a sense of texture brings a sense of doubt.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, texture is not smooth and regular. Whenever we talk about texture, there is some pattern in the texture, as when we talk about fabric of some kind. That automatically means ups and downs

and minute details. There are constant bumps or spots of texture. Otherwise, you could not experience textures. For instance, if you are being consumed in a fire and you touch an ember, there is the texture of that ember or fire coming closer and closer to you. It is sort of a pulsating quality. It is a momentary quality naturally, automatically.

S: Why does that bring doubt?

TR: Only the sense of texture can bring doubt in terms of the realm of hell. There is no greater space at all. Only the sensitivity to texture can bring doubt; only that can bring understanding. You have to perceive the texture, you have to feel it. It is like a blind person reading braille. If a person is already blind constantly, the only way to relate with reading is to read braille.

Student: Rinpoche, what is the buddha of the realm of gods?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The god realm buddha holds a tamboura, a musical instrument, so that he can sing and play sweet music for the gods, to relate with their absorption. He draws them out of their absorption by presenting some kind of gentle seduction.

Student: Rinpoche, what grasping is involved with the realm of hell? There seems to be a certain grasping with all the other realms.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose you could say that there is a sense of the maintenance of your perpetual continuity of being exposed to cold weather. The realm of hell is very much like living in an extraordinarily warm temperature; you have created a sort of super-central-heated house, whereas the world outside is cold weather.

S: By warmth, do you mean security?

TR: Security—which is based on your hatred, presenting your own hatred and having it bounce back on you.

Student: What buddha family is associated with the realm of hell?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems that the realm of hell is based on the vajra family. There is constant assertion; asserting yourself.

S: Is it this refusal to see the mirror?

TR: Yes, definitely.

S: Is that part of the whole activity of the aggression itself?

TR: You refuse to see the reflections, but you are fascinated by the

textures, which is a different kind of thing altogether. That seems to be one of the reasons the hell realm becomes so powerful.

Student: What buddha family is associated with the human realm? Did you say that it was the padma family?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's right, yes.

Student: There seems to be a kind of similarity in the incommunicability of the asura realm and the hell realm. It seems that this one-upmanship game is very similar to the jealous god business. Is there a difference?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, the difference seems to be that in the asura realm you are trying to cover your area of jealousy constantly, whereas in the hell realm you don't have to try to cover it, because your hatred has already covered that area. The only thing left for you to do is to relate with the temperatures or the textures, your aggression has become so powerful.

Student: Rinpoche, you mentioned the physical characteristics of the hungry ghosts. Are there physical characteristics in each realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The particular physical characteristics of the hungry ghosts seem to be prominent; but except for the animal realm, the rest of them seem to have the same quality.

Student: Rinpoche, how is the realm of hell connected with meditation? It seems as if much of our meditation is pretty aggressive. How do we get out of it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It seems to be that way, yes. There is a sense of struggle. You really would like to apply your exertion, and you have to produce something out of the meditation you are doing. You are supposed to achieve something; you are supposed to learn something; there is some kind of duty involved with the meditation. And the more you try to put forth that kind of regimented, duty-oriented meditation, the more you end up in the hell realm. I suppose that the only way to relate with that is to regard meditation as a living situation rather than purely duty-oriented.

S: That would be a good way to avoid it, but if you find yourself there, then what?

TR: Well, then you don't regard yourself or your problem as a problem as such but as part of the general thought process, which happens automatically. Whenever any kind of ambition happens in meditation practice, it comes up in the thought process and the potential thought process, rather than anywhere else. So if you are able to see that kind of situation arising in meditation, if you regard it as thought process, then it becomes thought process. So it ceases to have a valuation of its own.

Student: As a rule, does one experience all the realms before liberation comes, or how does this work?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We have been experiencing them for a long time—all the time. And each of the realms has the possibility of relating with the enlightened state.

Student: Isn't the feeling of hunger painful in the hungry ghost realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is painful and irritating, but at the same time there is a sense of hunger as a kind of occupation, which is a very optimistic and hopeful experience. For instance, if you are going to get your dinner at twelve o'clock, you begin to enjoy your hunger at eleven o'clock, knowing that you are going to get your dinner at twelve o'clock. So in that way you could consume more food.

Student: Rinpoche, where does the quality of clear light fit into the hungry ghost realm and the hell realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think that all the realms have that quality in them, because clear light comes up in terms of subtle gaps of all kinds. In the hell realm, clear light happens in experiencing the textures of the pain, which automatically has to have some kind of space. In the hungry ghost realm, there is constant yearning and looking for ways to try to fulfill your desire. That effort of trying to fulfill your desire also has this gap or spacious quality in it. There is clear light principle automatically.

S: Is this the relationship to enlightened gap that you mentioned?

TR: Yes.

SEVEN

The Sequence of Bardos

THERE ARE SIX TYPES of bardo experience connected with the six realms: becoming, birth, dream, death, isness, and meditation. A seventh bardo, the bardo of illusory body, points to the fundamentally shifty quality of experiences. Sipa bardo, which is the bardo of existence or becoming, stems from the current situation being manipulated by extreme hope and fear. So the birth of each realm is given by sipa bardo.

From that, because birth has been given already, that brings about another birth, or kye-ne bardo. The birth of kye-ne bardo is connected with manifesting that becoming process further. The bardo of becoming is more of a force of energy. But that energy has to materialize and function within some particular context or situation. So you have kye-ne bardo.

Birth and death are connected with the quality of circulation, which relates to birth and death together. Birth and death have to be regarded as definite events: birth is an event and death is an event as well. Those events could function according to their own nature. The continuity between birth and death is largely a survival process; that which builds a bridge between birth and death is the struggle for survival. The struggle for survival is based on administration, the maintenance of whatever solid characteristics you may have. Such maintenance is not necessarily physical maintenance alone, at all. If you want to maintain yourself, to begin with you have to have the politics or the philosophy of the maintenance. That philosophy and politics of maintenance introduces itself into domestic situations based on past experience bringing present

experience, and present experience being dependent on what will be, or the future. So you have a past-present-future dwelling process. And both the past and the future could be said to be imaginary worlds. That is milam bardo, or dream bardo.

Dream bardo does not necessarily mean the quality of dreaming literally, but it has the style of imagination, or trying to instigate some activity. It has the quality of constantly trying to set the wheel in motion, constantly flowing. In order to set the wheel in motion, you have to have concepts and ideas, and those concepts and ideas are purely imaginary. It is a kind of guesswork in that sense—trying to achieve something as you speed along or trying to destroy something as you speed along. It is like the analogy of a cowardly soldier who runs away and throws rocks behind him, hoping that his enemies could be killed in the process of his escape. Without aim or direction, he just hopes that some particular rock he throws behind him, over his shoulder, will land on his enemy's head. In the same way, the dream bardo has a quality of going along hoping things will develop in accordance with your wishes. It is not so much just dwelling on something. It is more like imagination being put into practice by another imagination. And that imagination speaks its own language, because you have created the projections. So in the end a whole solid world is built. It is like the bouncing backward and forward of an echo in a cave: each echo throws back its sound and the whole thing builds up into a crescendo. So the dream bardo seems to be the dream *of* dreams: on the ground of dreams, and dream bardo exists as a further dream.

Then you have death, or chikha bardo. Death is the end of all those dreams, because your expectations, attempts, or desire to watch your own funeral party are impractical. You realize you cannot take part in your own funeral party; you cannot attend your own funeral. So there is a sense of the failure of continuing your existence. When you realize that failure to continue your existence, the dream begins to end. "I am really going to die, so I might as well regard myself as a dead person"—that is the end of the dream. Because it is the end of the dream, therefore you cannot relate with the mind-body physical situation at all. It is overwhelmingly loose and unclear. Death is the end of vision, the end of expectations, and the end of continuity. Death is, therefore, one of the outstanding experiences in the bardo. You cannot continue anymore; and not only that, but you realize that the games you developed through

the dream bardo have not been all that realistic. One begins to realize the impermanent quality of all situations. In fact, the very idea of going from one experience to another experience is also seen as impermanent, as a continual death process. Then—because it is the end of all kinds of dreams, because you have experienced the living quality of the impermanence, the transitory nature of all beings—you begin to ask questions. That is where chönyi bardo begins to develop.

Chönyi is a Tibetan word which literally means "dharmaness," or "isness": *chö* means "dharma"; *nyi* means "isness." In Sanskrit it is called dharmata. The word *dharmata* is similar to the word *shunyata. Shunya* means "empty"; *ta* means "-ness"; so *shunyata* means "emptiness." Likewise, *dharmata* means "dharmaness," "the isness of all existence." The bardo of dharmata is the awareness of the basic space in which things could function. In other words, a complete comprehension of the process developed through the bardo experiences is based on a pattern of relating with space. This process cannot function or happen as it is if you do not relate with space. So one tends to develop a certain sense of spaciousness, a sense of lubrication. Lubrication could develop because of that accommodating quality. And that lubrication, or dharmata experience, is what has been referred to in Evans-Wentz's work as the clear light. In this sense, clear light is lubrication, accommodation, letting things follow their own course.

That brings us into the next situation, which is the bardo of meditation. Now that you have experienced birth and existence and death and everything, you begin to have a definite experience of what is called samten bardo, which is the meditative state in the bardo experience. The meditative experience of the bardo state is therefore based on the realization of the lubrication, or dharmata, as an object, as a particular situation. Essentially it is that wisdom becomes knowledge; jnana (wisdom) becomes prajna (knowledge). In other words, complete experience becomes knowledge. Complete experience has been perceived by criteria of some kind, by a certain perspective or view. Jnana has been seen as a learning process, as something we study. So jnana has become prajna. This is like the difference between somebody meditating and somebody studying the experience of meditation as a case history or as archeological intrigue.

The meditative experience of samten bardo is the microscope with which you could examine the clear light experience. It is also a way of

accentuating the blackness and whiteness of the experience which happens within that accommodating open space. In other words, samten bardo, the meditative state of bardo, is not necessarily the practice of meditation as it traditionally has been taught; but it is seeing the clarity of situations as they are. For instance, if you realize you are imprisoned in the hungry ghost realm, you begin to realize the sharp edges of hungry ghost experience, as well as the space in which the sharp edges could exist in hungry ghost experience. And the same thing applies with any of the realms.

Samten bardo is a kind of watcher which transmits its message to the observer, as opposed to the watcher. So you have a double watcher in that case. You have one watcher who is like the spokesman who relates from one situation to another situation; you also have the person who appointed that watcher to his occupation, his job, his duty. In other words, you have intuitive insight, which has the ability to digest experiences; but at the same time, in order to digest experiences, you have to point them out to somebody who collects your food. That which is collecting the food is the watcher. And the food is being passed on to the central authority who appointed the watcher. This is extremely subtle. It is almost nonwatching—a perceiving entity, so to speak. So you have two types of intelligence there: crude intelligence and subtle intelligence. Crude intelligence is the watcher, the analyst: subtle intelligence is the intellectual, analytical conclusions transformed into experiential understanding. Those are the two types of intelligence—which is the samten bardo experience of the meditative state.

It seems that that kind of experience leads inevitably to the bardo of the after-death experience, which is called gyulü bardo. *Gyulü* means "illusory body," "body of illusions," so gyulü bardo is the bardo of illusion. That brings us to the point where finally we are suspended in the extreme experience of our life situation: the hell realm, hungry ghost realm, animal realm, human realm, or whatever. We realize that we are suspended: we haven't really been born, we haven't really died, we haven't really been dreaming at all. We haven't been experiencing clear light in a realistic way either, in actual fact. All of those situations are expressions of suspension between one experience of extremes and another. That sense of suspension seems to be the basic quality of bardo. You are in between, in no-man's-land. You are between extremes, and you realize that that in itself is an extreme situation. If you are in the

realm of the gods, for instance, you realize that there is really no need to maintain yourself. Instead your path has been taken over by the inevitability of that natural, organic, mechanical process.

I suppose the conclusion that we come to in this seminar is that the six realms are largely based on the six types of bardo experience. That enables us to relate with the realms not purely as suffering or as dwelling on something. In order to dwell, you have to play games with that occupation. For instance, if you are born as a human, you have to grow up; you have to have some occupation and lifestyle; you have to feed yourself; you have to experience old age; and you also have to experience illness and death. Human life—all of life—contains those developments. The six realms and the six types of bardo experience are similar: in each realm you have birth, you have death, you have suspension of those experiences, you have dreams. You experience that your life consists of both space and objects, form and emptiness, simultaneously—or maybe side by side. I hope I haven't confused anybody by such a shocking conclusion.

Student: Rinpoche, to what use can we put the things that we have learned in this seminar?

Trungpa Rinpoche: What do you think? Do you have any idea?

S: I've thought of them as giving a sort of a matrix by which we can be aware of our own patterns of behavior.

TR: Yes. Well, it is the same as the presentation of the four noble truths. Suffering should be realized; the origin of suffering should be overcome; the cessation of suffering should be attained; and the path should be seen as truth. It is the same kind of thing. You see, one of the problems or one of necessities of hearing the teaching is that we generally have a confused picture, completely unmethodical and chaotic. We can't make heads or tails of what is actually happening, what is the process, or what is the situation. But in this case, we are putting that confusion into a pattern. Confused nature has a pattern. It is methodically chaotic.

So this seems to be a way of seeing those patterns as they are. It seems to be a necessity of learning that you begin to have a sense of geography, a road map of some kind, so that you can relate with such patterns. That brings more solidity and confidence. So you don't have to look painfully for some kind of stepping-stone; instead, a stepping-stone

presents itself in your life. You have the confidence to start on the first thing that is available within your experience—if you know the geography or road map of developmental psychological structures.

Student: Rinpoche, it seems that it is the energy of the situation that determines the realm of existence. Is it the same order of energy that determines the bardo state?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so. You see, the bardo states are the constituents of the realms, so they all have to function within some basic space or energy.

Student: Are there predominant bardo experiences for each of the realms?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, we could look at it that way, as we did in the Allenspark seminar on the six realms. That is another way of looking at the whole situation, seeing each state of bardo as being connected with a different realm. But at the same time, each realm should have all the bardo experiences. In the human realm, for instance, in our lives as human beings, we have the experience of all six bardos happening to us all of the time. And the other realms could be seen in the same way. From this perspective, no particular extreme, or bardo, is related with any particular realm, necessarily. But each realm contains birth, death, spaciousness, watching and observing yourself, having a conclusion of yourself.

S: How could all six bardos be going on at the same time?

TR: The reason the six bardos could function simultaneously is because within these six types of bardo experience, the constituents, or the styles, are always the same.

Student: In the meditative state there are two kinds of intelligence: one is crude, which is the watcher; the other is more subtle, a perceiving kind of intelligence. Is that watching, or feedback, basically a healthy thing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: None of the six bardos or realms are being evaluated as unhealthy or healthy. We are just purely presenting a picture of them as they are, their general makeup. For instance, we are not discussing whether having a head is a healthy thing or having arms is a healthy thing.

S: There's no sense in evaluating?

TR: No. It is a neutral situation, and basically mechanical. Maybe it is misleading to call samten bardo meditation, the meditative state. It isn't meditation in the sense of the practice of sitting meditation or awareness practice or the cultivation of jhana states. It is a natural function.

S: But when you refer to self-consciousness, I usually have the feeling that it is not such a good or healthy thing to always be so self-conscious.

TR: Well, you see, the self-consciousness we are talking about is quite different from the watcher in the actual practice of meditation. It is related with the basic mechanism which perceives and which works things out. It is that which makes you aware that you are sitting and meditating. In a very, very minute and very subtle way, you have some understanding that you are actually meditating, whether crude self-consciousness applies or not. Even if you transcend crude self-consciousness, you still have the sense that you have overcome the crude self-consciousness; that still goes on. That is the basic perceiver. It is a mechanically necessary situation.

Student: You spoke at times about stepping out of the bardo states, and about doubt being the point at which you would just step out. Are any of these six states connected with that sense of doubt?

Trungpa Rinpoche: All of them have to exist in some kind of basic space. So all of them have equal possibilities of stepping out of intense bardo experience. They each exist in a particular fashion, a particular form—but these forms could exist only in relation to space.

S: What is space?

TR: Space is where they could be accommodated; it is the basic environment where these six types of bardo could exist. The very idea of the existence of such experiences automatically brings up the natural function of the space where they could exist as well.

Student: Does the clear light that you talked about exist in space?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The experience of clear light exists in space, and when clear light ceases to become an *experience,* then that itself *is* space. When we talk about the bardo of clear light, it is still bardo, because it is experienced as bardo. Space has been perceived as space, seen as space.

Student: Can somebody who is in the realm of hell actually say they are? Can they make that statement? Or in any realm?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, definitely, yes. That is where you are. You have an intense experience going on. You cannot just miss that altogether; it exists very solidly there.

Student: Rinpoche, what's the big difference between me and a tulku?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You are one. *Tulku* means a person who has been reborn. *Tul* means "manifestation," *ku* means "body"; so *tulku* means "body of manifestation." Everybody is a tulku.

S: In the appendix of your book *Born in Tibet,* you describe the birth and death process of the tulku as not the same as for the ordinary persons.

TR: Well, I suppose that is *a* tulku as opposed to *the* tulku.

S: What do you mean when you talk about *a* tulku?

TR: That's yourself.

S: I'm talking about tulkus in the sense that, for instance, people say the Dalai Lama is supposed to be a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. In other words, there is a force operating other than the karmic force.

TR: Those things are highly colored by the wishful thinking of the congregate. It doesn't mean that the Dalai Lama is the one and only tulku of Avalokiteshvara. His character, his basic makeup, contains that compassionate quality.

S: Is that by accident or by will?

TR: It seems to be both. If you try to create something by will, you have to use accidents as a way of channeling yourself.

S: Considering the various principles, you could, for instance, identify with the bodhisattva of compassion. Is that so?

TR: I suppose so, yes. Each person has his or her own particular buddha family. And obviously somebody could decide to proclaim their relationship with their buddha nature, that they are what they are. Somebody could even became Avalokiteshvara.

Student: I'm not really clear about the bardo states. Did I understand you to say that the bardo states coexist simultaneously when a realm is present?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's right, yes, as the mechanics or the context of the realms. In order to exist you have to be born, you have to die, you have to have dreams, all kind of things. So that is what it is. And in

this particular context of bardo, the highlights of one's experience are divided into six types.

S: Should I not be satisfied with my experience until I am able to realize that these coexist and that my feeling of one succeeding the other is just a partial view?

TR: They automatically present themselves to you, you can't miss them. They are such powerful experiences in every way: birth and death are very obvious.

S: Yes, but sequentially, not coexisting.

TR: Not necessarily. They all exist simultaneously in the sense that birth means death—and it also means dream, and clear light, and the bardo of meditation. If you make a pot, for instance, you have to have clay, you have to have water, you have to have heat. So those elements exist simultaneously within one pot. It is the same kind of thing.

Student: Where did this information about the bardos and the realms come from? Was it brought to Tibet by Padmasambhava and Tilopa?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Historically, the basic idea developed out of the Pure Land school in Tibetan Buddhism, which was particularly strong in the study of death and bardo experiences.

S: Is that the devotional school?

TR: Not in the popular sense that it exists today in Japan. Instead it is the idea of studying your death. Amitabha's realm is regarded as a way of relating to your after-death experience in terms of limitlessness—*Amitabha* means "limitless light." Many sutras of Amitabha talk about the death experience being connected with the living experience as well. In addition to the Pure Land teachings on death, there are also tantric expositions of hallucinations and mental objects becoming overwhelming in life, as in the visions of the bardo experience described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.* In these two teachings—the Pure Land school and certain tantric texts—the experience of the living world is seen as a pattern of solid, colorful situations. What we are discussing seems to be an amalgamation of those two principles working together, which was presented particularly by Padmasambhava. These teachings are also related with the exposition of the twelve nidanas, the twelvefold causation of the samsaric chain reaction, the process of samsaric development. So it is a further amalgamation. In a sense you could say it is an amalgamation of the abhidharma experience of psychological patterns and the

mystical experience of tantric awareness of deities, which are seen as types of emotions, or of human ego mentalities. Death is seen as being birth; after-death is the same thing as life. You live in the birth-death process constantly. That is the experience of the Amitabha sutras, which are an amalgamation of all these put together and which developed this particular formula.

It seems that these principles were in the teaching already when Buddhism developed in Tibet, but they were brought forth in particular by a teacher called Karma Lingpa, who lived around about Gampopa's time. He introduced in particular how to relate with the dying person in terms of the living person. I think Karma Lingpa was probably the instigator, or the one person who brought into living form the practice of the teachings of bardo.

Student: I have two questions: one is, why do you always arrive late? Is there any particular reason?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I arrive late!

S: Thank you. The second question is, whenever you make any statement, you stay it *seems* that this is so, but even then, the way you say it has such an air of definiteness about it. Why do you use that particular prefix?

TR: Well, it seems that what is presented is more like a supposition, because we can't agree on any one particular thing very solidly. If there are sixty people in the audience, they will have sixty types of experiences. So you can't make things too definite. And again, conclusions should come from individuals. It could be said to be a possible attempt to present the case without trying to preach.

Student: Do you think that these same ideas or similar ideas to those you have elucidated during this seminar can be found in Western traditions? And particularly, do you think that recent Western psychology can throw more light on it? Would it be useful to try to work with the two together?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is quite possible that these different realms have definite psychotic qualities. For instance, the realm of hell is claustrophobic, and the asura realm could be said to be schizophrenic, and the realm of the gods could be said to be religious maniacs. All kinds of things

could be said about it, and I'm sure that some day it would be interesting to tie them all together in that way.

S: But most Western psychology places a very strong emphasis on the early years of life, say from birth to the age of four or five, as opposed to perhaps the idea of karma or anything like that. I haven't heard you talk too much about that formative period in a person's life. Is there a conflict there, would you say?

TR: I think there seems to be a problem there, if you purely study the case history. "Because you have had a case history of unfortunate situations, therefore you experience pain now"—that seems to be an attempt to make the study of psychological states extremely scientific. It seems to be a form of protection psychologists developed, which they don't necessarily have to do. And generally, that kind of psychological analysis based on case history is unhealthy, because you don't feel the openness or the spaciousness of the present or the future. You feel you are trapped forever and that it is a completely hopeless situation. So I think there tends to be a conflict with that approach, which is so past-oriented.

S: Isn't that true of the idea of karma also?

TR: Not necessarily, not necessarily at all. You could say the present situation is based on the past in some sense, but at the same time, you are free from the past. The present is free from the past; therefore, it could be present. Otherwise it would continue to be past all the time. and the future is an independent situation. So there is a sense of freedom happening constantly. For instance, we could say that we arrived and we entered into this hall and now we are here. That doesn't mean that we cannot get out of it, because we decided to come here. We are not stuck in this hall. It is purely up to individuals if they decide to walk out of this hall or not. It is purely up to us. So the case history is that you are already here. Whether you walked here or you came here by car does not make any difference.

Student: There seems to be a link between the past and the present, since we drag characteristics of the old realm into the new one.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, in a sense we do and in a sense we don't. We have habitual patterns that we have developed, but those habitual patterns we have developed also have to maintain themselves by means of present situations. So the present is partly interdependent with the past,

but it is also partly independent of the past. All the realms could exist or function as they are in the present circumstances.

S: But it seems you are always the same.

TR: You can't be the same person constantly at all. And you can't necessarily have a fixed situation of realms at all. Even the realms have a pulsating quality. They flicker between birth, death, and the others constantly. So each realm is a very tentative world. We do develop one particular heavy, strong experience, and we tend to reinforce that experience, but that doesn't have to be the same realm all the time at all. It seems that the realms we are talking about are largely based on the different states of emotions that exist in our basic being. We can't have one emotion happening constantly, but emotions change. Each emotion transforms itself into, or becomes, a realm. So a realm in this case is not only the intense state you are in alone, but the intense environment you are in as well—which you have created.

Student: Rinpoche, what is mindfulness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Mindfulness is simply seeing the accuracy or the precision of the moment, and you cannot help being right there. It is seeing or experiencing the abrupt and sharp nowness, with extremely sharp contrast, sharp edges. And awareness seems to have the quality of there being a lot of sharp edges happening simultaneously everywhere. So you are not focusing on one item alone, but there are many items, and each of them is clear and precise, coexisting in one space. So there seem to be a lot of differences between mindfulness and awareness.

Student: What is the watcher?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The watcher is a kind of informer who perceives and sees and comments and makes things presentable to you. So it is constantly editing all the time, the translator.

Student: In your teaching you put a great deal of emphasis on meditation practice: when you meditate, how long you meditate, where you meditate. What I would like to know in particular is how you would contrast this with Zen.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The meditation teachings developed in Zen and presented to the West have the quality of creating an island, so to speak. In the midst of an uncultured, if I may say so, environment, they are

trying to create another civilization or culture. For instance, in a chaotic city, you have a very peaceful and quite zendo. There is a kind of Japanese world transported or transplanted into that particular zendo environment. The difference betweeen that and the Zen developed in Japan is that they don't have to transport or import or create an island at all. because that whole style of environment is always there. The zendo is just purely one extra room where you come to sit and meditate. So there are two ways of dealing with things: re-creating a situation or accepting the situation as it is. The eccentric quality of transplanting one culture into the midst of another culture accentuates the fascination, and also accentuates a kind of extreme militant outlook. In other words, there is the definite idea that Americans have got to become Japanese, in spite of their physical differences, which one can't help.

On the other hand, I think in regard to the essence of the teaching that has developed and the practice of meditation—as far as techniques go, there doesn't seem to be any particular difference at all between the Tibetan teachings and Zen. Particularly the Soto school of Zen seems to have a lot in common with the style of meditation that the Tibetan teachers have taught. So as far as the technique of meditation goes, it seems to be almost identical, you could say. Zen students could practice Zen and then they could come and study with us and it would be just continuing their practice, rather than their having to give up anything in their practice. They just continue with meditation as they have been doing.

There seem to be some external differences of style, in that when Buddhism came to Tibet, the Tibetans adopted Buddhism as Tibetan Buddhism rather than trying to become Indians. In fact, they did not even bother to learn the Sanskrit language or the Indian language at all. The Buddhist teachings were translated into Tibetan—including the names of places like Bodhgaya or Benares or Kushinagara and names of people like Buddha and Ananda. The names of places were translated into Tibetan words so that they did not have to feel foreign to Tibetans. They were just other Tibetan names, as though they existed in Tibet. And such people also seemed to exist in Tibet, because they had Tibetan names. So the Tibetans used their own words, but they got the sense of it. So it seems to be largely based on different ways of transplanting the dharma in terms of basic environment. There could be American Buddhism—I don't think this is a particularly ambitious project.

S: This is a question of style, of a difference in style. In Zen, the teacher always comes to sit with the students. It is important as an example. I was wondering why you don't come and sit with us.

TR: Well, that is another sort of sociological issue, so to speak. The pattern happening in the world in the time of the Buddha and Christ was that it was an age of monarchy and of extreme leadership. For instance, the teachings of Buddha spread all over the Indian continent and Asia, from Japan and China to Afghanistan and up to Mongolia and Russia. There was a tremendous movement of one person spreading his teaching, like expanding an empire. And it seems that in the twentieth century, that dictatorial or imperial style has diminished. Mussolini and Hitler attempted to re-create that, in their way, but didn't succeed. So today there is a more democratic pattern.

It seems that presently in the world there is not going to be one savior or one great guru, one savior of the world that everybody has to follow. Everything has to be individual style, democratic, an individual discovery. The same is true in the practice of meditation. Obviously somebody has to instigate the idea of meditation, but it has to be leaderless practice. So the process is decentralized.

The whole approach should not be based on one person; it should be based on the individualities of people. That seems to be a form of insurance policy for future spiritual development. If you lose a particular leader, if that person has left the country or died, you don't look for somebody else to lead your meditation, but in the same way as you've been doing it all along, you can continue to do it all the time.

Student: I find it a little bit disturbing, the expectations I have from leaders or people like teachers to tell me what to do. So I find what you are saying a bit unsettling. But apart from all that, do you meditate in the formal sense ever in your life? I know from reading your book that you have in the past. My question is a personal question. Do you feel like you ever need to meditate? Do you ever do it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that seems to depend on the situation—but formal sitting, in terms of imposing it on oneself, somehow doesn't apply anymore.

S: To whom?

TR: To whom. That's it.

Well, perhaps we should close now. I hope that we can relate what we have discussed in this seminar with our personal experience. I sincerely hope that it will save us further expenses, in that we don't have to go shopping and spend more money.

Appendix A

THE SIX STATES OF BARDO

God Realm	Samten Bardo meditation/ clear light	eternity/emptiness
Jealous God Realm	Kye-ne Bardo birth	speed/stillness
Human Realm	Gyulü Bardo illusory body	real/unreal
Animal Realm	Milam Bardo dream	asleep/awake
Hungry Ghost Realm	Sipa Bardo existence/becoming	grasp/let go
Hell Realm	Chikha Bardo death	pain/pleasure destroy/create

Appendix B

THE CYCLE OF THE BARDOS

Becoming / Sipa
Birth / Kye-ne
Dream / Milam
Death / Chikha
Isness / Chönyi
Meditation / Samten
Illusory Body / Gyulü

Notes

1. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, comp. and ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927).

2. *The Heart Sutra:* one of the Prajnaparamita Sutras and a fundamental discourse on wisdom and emptiness.

3. Chögyam Trungpa, foreword to *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation,* translated and annotated by Herbert V. Guenther (Berkeley: Shambhala Publications, 1971).

4. E. V. Gold, *The American Book of the Dead* (Berkeley: And/Or Press, 1975).

5. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966; Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1985).

From

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo

COMMENTARY BY

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

Foreword

THE *BARDO THÖDRÖL* (bar-do'i-thos'grol) is one of a series of instructions on six types of liberation: liberation through hearing, liberation through wearing, liberation through seeing, liberation through remembering, liberation through tasting, and liberation through touching. They were composed by Padmasambhava and written down by his wife, Yeshe Tsogyal, along with the sadhana of the two mandalas of forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities.

Padmasambhava buried these texts in the Gampo hills in Central Tibet, where later the great teacher Gampopa established his monastery. Many other texts and sacred objects were buried in this way in different places throughout Tibet, and are known as terma, "hidden treasures." Padmasambhava gave the transmission of power to discover the termas to his twenty-five chief disciples. The bardo texts were later discovered by Karma Lingpa, who was an incarnation of one of these disciples.

Liberation, in this case, means that whoever comes into contact with this teaching—even in the form of doubt, or with an open mind—receives a sudden glimpse of enlightenment through the power of the transmission contained in these treasures.

Karma Lingpa belonged to the Nyingma tradition but his students were all of the Kagyü tradition. He gave the first transmission of the six liberation teachings to Dödul Dorje, the thirteenth Karmapa, who in turn gave it to Gyurme Tenphel, the eighth Trungpa. This transmission was kept alive in the Surmang monasteries of the Trungpa lineage, and from there it spread back into the Nyingma tradition.

The student of this teaching practices the sadhana and studies the texts so as to become completely familiar with the two mandalas as part of his own experience.

I received this transmission at the age of eight, and was trained in this teaching by my tutors, who also guided me in dealing with dying people. Consequently I visited dying or dead people about four times a week from that time onward. Such continual contact with the process of death, particularly watching one's close friends and relatives, is considered extremely important for students of this tradition, so that the notion of impermanence becomes a living experience rather than a philosophical view.

This book is a further attempt to make this teaching applicable to students in the West. I hope that the sadhana may also be translated in the near future, so that this tradition may be fully carried out.

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

Commentary

The Message of the Book

There seems to be a fundamental problem when we refer to the subject of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.* The approach of comparing it with the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* in terms of mythology and lore of the dead person seems to miss the point, which is the fundamental principle of birth and death recurring constantly in this life. One could refer to this book as the "Tibetan Book of Birth." The book is not based on death as such, but on a completely different concept of death. It is a "Book of Space." Space contains birth and death; space creates the environment in which to behave, breathe, and act; it is the fundamental environment which provides the inspiration for this book.

The pre-Buddhist Bön civilization of Tibet contained very accurate indications on how to treat the psychic force left behind by a dead person, the footprints or temperature, so to speak, which is left behind when he is gone. It seems that both the Bön tradition and the Egyptian are based on that particular type of experience, how to relate with the footprints, rather than dealing with the person's consciousness. But the basic principle I am trying to put across now is that of the uncertainty of sanity and insanity, or confusion and enlightenment, and the possibilities of all sorts of visionary discoveries that happen on the way to sanity or insanity.

Bardo means gap; it is not only the interval of suspension after we die but also suspension in the living situation; death happens in the living situation as well. The bardo experience is part of our basic psychological

makeup. There are all kinds of bardo experiences happening to us all the time, experiences of paranoia and uncertainty in everyday life; it is like not being sure of our ground, not knowing quite what we have asked for or what we are getting into. So this book is not only a message for those who are going to die and those who are already dead, but it is also a message for those who are already born; birth and death apply to everybody constantly, at this very moment.

The bardo experience can be seen in terms of the six realms of existence that we go through, the six realms of our psychological states. Then it can be seen in terms of the different deities who approach us, as they are described in the book. In the first week the peaceful deities, and in the last week the wrathful deities; there are the five tathagatas and the herukas, and the gauris who are messengers of the five tathagatas, presenting themselves in all sorts of terrifying and revolting fashions. The details presented here are very much what happens in our daily living situation, they are not just psychedelic experiences or visions that appear after death. These experiences can be seen purely in terms of the living situation; that is what we are trying to work on.

In other words, the whole thing is based on another way of looking at the psychological picture of ourselves in terms of a practical meditative situation. Nobody is going to save us, everything is left purely to the individual, the commitment to who we are. Gurus or spiritual friends might instigate that possibility, but fundamentally they have no function.

How do we know that these things actually happen to people who are dying? Has anyone come back from the grave and told us the experiences they went through? Those impressions are so strong that someone recently born should have memories of the period between death and birth; but then as we grow up we are indoctrinated by our parents and society, and we put ourselves into a different framework, so that the original deep impressions become faded except for occasional sudden glimpses. Even then we are so suspicious of such experiences, and so afraid of losing any tangible ground in terms of living in this world, that any intangible kind of experience is treated half-heartedly or dismissed altogether. To look at this process from the point of view of what happens when we die seems like the study of a myth; we need some practical experience of this continual process of bardo.

There is the conflict between body and consciousness, and there is the continual experience of death and birth. There is also the experience

of the bardo of dharmata, the luminosity, and of the bardo of becoming, of possible future parents or grounding situations. We also have the visions of the wrathful and peaceful divinities, which are happening constantly, at this very moment. If we are open and realistic enough to look at it in this way, then the actual experience of death and the bardo state will not be either purely a myth or an extraordinary shock, because we have already worked with it and become familiar with the whole thing.

The Bardo of the Moment before Death

The first basic bardo experience is the experience of uncertainty about whether one is actually going to die, in the sense of losing contact with the solid world, or whether one could continue to go on living. This uncertainty is not seen in terms of leaving the body, but purely in terms of losing one's ground; the possibility of stepping out from the real world into an unreal world.

We could say that the real world is that in which we experience pleasure and pain, good and bad. There is some act of intelligence which provides the criteria of things as they are, a basic dualistic notion. But if we are completely in touch with these dualistic feelings, that absolute experience of duality is itself the experience of nonduality. Then there is no problem at all, because duality is seen from a perfectly open and clear point of view in which there is no conflict; there is a tremendous encompassing vision of oneness. Conflict arises because duality is not seen as it is at all. It is seen only in a biased way, a very clumsy way. In fact, we do not perceive anything properly, and we begin to wonder whether such things as myself and my projections really exist. So when we talk about the dualistic world as confusion, that confusion is not the complete dualistic world, but only half-hearted, and this causes tremendous dissatisfaction and uncertainty; it builds up to the point of fear of becoming insane, the point where there are possibilities of leaving the world of duality and going into a sort of woolly, fuzzy emptiness, which is the world of the dead, the graveyard that exists in the midst of fog.

The book describes the death experience in terms of the different elements of the body, going deeper and deeper. Physically you feel heavy when the earth element dissolves into water; and when water dissolves into fire you find that the circulation begins to cease functioning. When

fire dissolves into air, any feeling of warmth or growth begins to dissolve; and when air dissolves into space you lose the last feeling of contact with the physical world. Finally, when space or consciousness dissolves into the central nadi, there is a sense of internal luminosity, an inner glow, when everything has become completely introverted.

Such experiences happen constantly. The tangible, logical state dissolves, and one is not quite certain whether one is attaining enlightenment or losing one's sanity. Whenever that experience happens it can be seen in four or five different stages. First the tangible quality of physical, living logic becomes vague; in other words, you lose physical contact. Then you automatically take refuge in a more functional situation, which is the water element; you reassure yourself that your mind is still functioning. In the next stage, the mind is not quite sure whether it is functioning properly or not, something begins to cease operating in its circulation. The only way to relate is through emotions, you try to think of someone you love or hate, something very vivid, because the watery quality of the circulation does not work any more, so the fiery temperature of love and hate becomes more important. Even that gradually dissolves into air, and there is a faint experience of openness, so that there is a tendency to lose your grip on concentrating on love or trying to remember the person you love. The whole thing seems to be hollow inside.

The next experience is the luminosity. You are willing to give in because you cannot struggle any more, and a kind of carelessness arises at that moment. It is as though pain and pleasure are occurring at the same time, or a powerful shower of icy cold water and boiling hot water is pouring simultaneously over your body. It is an intense experience, very powerful and full, the experience of oneness where both pain and pleasure are the same. The dualistic struggle of trying to *be* something is completely confused by the two extreme forces of hope for enlightenment and fear of becoming insane. The two extremes are so concentrated that it allows a certain relaxation; and when you do not struggle any more the luminosity presents itself naturally.

The next step is the experience of luminosity in terms of daily life. The luminosity is neutral ground or background, a gap when the intensity slackens. Then some intelligence begins to connect it to the awakened state of mind, leading to a sudden glimpse of meditative experience or buddha nature, which could also be called the dharmakaya. But if we

have no means of connecting with the basic intelligence, and confused energy still dominates our process of mind, then the energy builds up blindly and finally falls down into different levels of diluted energy, so to speak, from the absolute energy of the luminosity. Some basic tendency of grasping begins to develop in the state of luminosity, and from that the experience of the six realms of the world develops according to its intensity. But that tenseness or tightness cannot just function by itself without an activator of energy; in other words, energy is being used in order to grasp. We can now look at the six realms of the world from the point of view of different types of instinct.

The Realm of Hell

We can begin with the realm of hell, which is the most intense. First there is a buildup of energies, of emotions, to a crescendo, so that at some stage we find it very confusing whether the energies are controlling us or we are controlling them. Then suddenly we lose track of this whole race, and our mind is put into a blank state which is the luminosity. From that blank state an intense temptation to fight begins to develop, and that paranoia also brings terror. Originally the paranoia and terror were supposed to fight against something, but one is not quite certain whom exactly one is fighting; and when the whole thing has developed, the terror begins to turn against oneself. When one tries to strike out, instead of fighting the projection one is striking inward.

It is like the story of the hermit who saw a leg of lamb in front of him, and wanted to pick it up and cook it. His teacher told him to mark it with a cross, then later he discovered that the cross was marked on his own chest. It is that kind of notion; you think there is something outside to attack or fight or win over. In most cases hatred is like that. You are angry with something and try to destroy it, but at the same time the process becomes self-destructive, it turns inward and you would like to run away from it; but then it seems too late, you are the anger itself, so there is nowhere to run away. You are haunting yourself constantly, and that is the development of hell.

Very vivid descriptions of hell are found in Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation,* and symbolically each intense torture is a psychological portrait of oneself. In the hell realm you are not exactly punished, but over-

whelmed by the environment of terror, which is described as fields and mountains of red-hot iron and space filled with sparks of fire. Even if you decide to run away you have to walk over this burning metal, and if you decide not to run away you are turned into charcoal yourself. There is intense claustrophobia, heat coming from all directions; the whole earth is turned into hot metal, whole rivers are turned into melted iron, and the whole sky is permeated with fire.

The other type of hell is the reverse, the experience of intense cold and snow, an icy world in which everything is completely frozen. This is another type of aggression, the aggression which refuses to communicate at all. It is a kind of indignation which usually comes from intense pride, and the pride turns into an ice-cold environment which reinforced by self-satisfaction begins to get into the system. It does not allow us to dance or smile or hear the music.

The Hungry Ghost Realm

Then we have another realm of mind, that of the pretas or hungry ghosts. To begin with we get into the luminosity by working up not aggression this time but intense greed. There is a sense of poverty, yet at the same time a sense of richness, contradictory and yet operating together simultaneously.

In the hungry ghost realm there is a tremendous feeling of richness, of gathering a lot of possessions; whatever you want you do not have to look for, but you find yourself possessing it. And this makes us more hungry, more deprived, because we get satisfaction not from possessing alone but from searching. But now, since we have everything already, we cannot go out and look for something and possess it. It is very frustrating, a fundamental insatiable hunger.

It is as though you are completely full, so full that you cannot eat any more; but you love to eat, and so you begin to have hallucinations of the flavor of food and the pleasure of eating it, tasting it, chewing it, swallowing it, and digesting it. The whole process seems luxurious, and you feel extremely envious of other people who can really be hungry and eat.

This is symbolized by the image of a person with a gigantic belly and extremely thin neck and tiny mouth. There are different stages of this

experience, depending on the intensity of hunger. Some people can pick food up, but then it dissolves or they cannot eat it; some people can pick it up and put it in their mouth, but they cannot swallow it; and some people can swallow it but once it gets into their stomach it begins to burn. There are all sorts of levels of that hunger, which constantly happen in everyday life.

The joy of possessing does not bring us pleasure anymore once we already possess something, and we are constantly trying to look for more possessions, but it turns out to be the same process all over again; so there is constant intense hunger which is based not on a sense of poverty but on the realization that we already have everything yet we cannot enjoy it. It is the energy there, the act of exchange, that seems to be more exciting; collecting it, holding it, putting it on, or eating it. That kind of energy is a stimulus, but the grasping quality makes it very awkward. Once you hold something you want to possess it; you no longer have the enjoyment of holding it, but you do not want to let go. Again it is a kind of love-hate relationship to projections. It is like the analogy that the next-door neighbor's garden is greener; once it becomes ours we realize there is no longer the joy or appreciation of beauty as we saw it at the beginning; the romantic quality of a love affair begins to fade away.

The Animal Realm

The animal realm is characterized by the absence of sense of humor. We discover that we cannot remain neutral in the luminosity, so we begin to play deaf and dumb, intelligently playing ignorant, which means that one is completely concealing another area, the area of sense of humor. It is symbolized by animals, which cannot laugh or smile; joy and pain are known to animals, but somehow the sense of humor or irony is not known to them.

One could develop this by believing in a certain religious framework, theological or philosophical conclusions, or by just simply remaining secure, practical, and solid. Such a person could be very efficient, very good and consistent at work, and quite contented. It is like a country farmer who attends to his farm methodically, with constant awareness

and openness and efficiency; or an executive who runs a business; or a family man whose life is very happy, predictable, and secure, with no areas of mystery involved at all. If he buys a new gadget there are always directions for using it. If there is any problem he can go to lawyers or priests or policemen, all sorts of professional people who are also secure and comfortable in their professions. It is utterly sensible and predictable, and highly mechanical at the same time.

What is lacking is that if any unknown, unpredictable situation occurs, there is a feeling of paranoia, of being threatened. If there are people who do not work, who look different, whose whole lifestyle is irregular, then the very existence of such people is in itself threatening. Anything unpredictable fundamentally threatens the basic pattern. So that apparently sane and solid situation without sense of humor is the animal realm.

The Human Realm

The human realm brings out another kind of situation which is not quite the same as the animal realm of surviving and living life. The human realm is based on passion, the tendency to explore and enjoy; it is the area of research and development, constantly trying to enrich. One could say that the human realm is closer psychologically to the hungry ghost quality of striving for something, but it also has some element of the animal realm, of putting everything into action predictably. And there is something extra connected with the human realm, a very strange kind of suspicion which comes with passion, and which makes human beings more cunning, shifty, and slippery. They can invent all sorts of tools and accentuate them in all sorts of sophisticated ways so as to catch another slippery person, and the other slippery person develops his or her own equipment of anti-tools. So we build up our world with tremendous success and achievement, but this escalation of building up tools and anti-tools develops constantly, and introduces more sources of passion and intrigue. Finally we are unable to accomplish such a big undertaking. We are subject to birth and death. The experience can be born, but it can also die; our discoveries may be impermanent and temporary.

The Realm of the Jealous Gods

The realm of the asuras or jealous gods is the highest realm as far as communication goes, it is a very intelligent situation. When you are suddenly separated from the luminosity there is a feeling of bewilderment, as though someone had dropped you in the middle of a wilderness; there is a tendency to look back and suspect your own shadow, whether it is a real shadow or someone's strategy. Paranoia is a kind of radar system, the most efficient radar system the ego could have. It picks up all sorts of faint and tiny objects, suspecting each one of them, and every experience in life is regarded as something threatening.

This is known as the realm of jealousy or envy, but it is not envy or jealousy as we generally think of them. It is something extremely fundamental, based on survival and winning. Unlike the human or animal realm, the purpose of this realm of the jealous gods is purely to function within the realm of intrigue; that is all there is, it is both occupation and entertainment. It is as if a person were born as a diplomat, raised as a diplomat, and died as a diplomat. Intrigue and relationship are his lifestyle and his whole livelihood. This intrigue could be based on any kind of relationship, an emotional relationship, or the relationship between friends, or the relationship of teacher and student, whatever there may be.

The Realm of the Gods

The final stage is the realm of the gods, deva loka. Again, when the person awakes from or steps out of the luminosity, there is some kind of unexpected pleasure, and one wants to maintain that pleasure. Instead of completely dissolving into neutral ground one suddenly begins to realize one's individuality, and individuality brings a sense of responsibility, of maintaining oneself. That maintaining oneself is the state of samadhi, perpetually living in a state of absorption and peace; it is the realm of the gods, which is known as the realm of pride. Pride in the sense of building one's own centralized body, preserving one's own health; in other words, it is intoxication with the existence of ego. You begin to feel thankful to have such confirmation that you *are* something after all, instead of the luminosity which is no-man's-land. And because you *are*

something, you have to maintain yourself, which brings a natural state of comfort and pleasure, complete absorption into oneself.

These six realms of the world are the source of the whole theme of living in samsara, and also of stepping into the dharmakaya realm. This will help us to understand the significance of the visions described in the book of the bardo of becoming, which is another kind of world. There is a confrontation of these two worlds: the experience of the six realms from the point of view of ego, and from the point of view of transcending ego. These visions could be seen as expressions of neutral energy, rather than as gods to save you from samsara or demons to haunt you.

The Bardo of Dharmata

Along with the six realms, we should have some understanding of the basic idea of bardo: *bar* means in between, and *do* means island or mark; a sort of landmark which stands between two things. It is rather like an island in the midst of a lake. The concept of bardo is based on the period between sanity and insanity, or the period between confusion and the confusion just about to be transformed into wisdom; and of course it could be said of the experience which stands between death and birth. The past situation has just occurred and the future situation has not yet manifested itself so there is a gap between the two. This is basically the bardo experience.

The dharmata bardo is the experience of luminosity. Dharmata means the essence of things as they are, the isness quality. So the dharmata bardo is basic, open, neutral ground, and the perception of that ground is dharmakaya, the body of truth or law.

When the perceiver or activator begins to dissolve into basic space, then that basic space contains the dharma, contains the truth, but that truth is transmitted in terms of samsara. So the space between samsara and the truth, the space the dharma comes through, provides the basic ground for the details of the five tathagatas and the peaceful and wrathful visions.

These expressions of the dharmata are manifested not in physical or visual terms but in terms of energy, energy which has the quality of the elements, earth, water, fire, air, and space. We are not talking about or-

dinary substances, the gross level of the elements, but of subtle elements. From the perceiver's point of view, perceiving the five tathagatas in the visions is not vision and not perception, not quite experience. It is not vision, because if you have vision you have to look, and looking is in itself an extroverted way of separating yourself from the vision. You cannot perceive, because once you begin to perceive you are introducing that experience into your system, which means again a dualistic style of relationship. You cannot even know it, because as long as there is a watcher to tell you that these are your experiences, you are still separating those energies away from you. It is very important to understand this basic principle, for it is really the key point of all the iconographical symbolism in tantric art. The popular explanation is that these pictures of different divinities are psychological portraits, but there is something more to it than this.

One of the most highly advanced and dangerous forms of practice is the bardo retreat, which consists of seven weeks of meditation in utter darkness. There are very simple visualizations, largely based on the principle of the five tathagatas seen as different types of eyes. The central place of the peaceful tathagatas is in the heart, so you see the different types of eyes in your heart; and the principle of the wrathful divinities is centralized in the brain, so you see certain types of eyes gazing at each other within your brain. These are not ordinary visualizations, but they arise out of the possibility of insanity and of losing ground altogether to the dharmata principle.

Then an absolute and definite experience of luminosity develops. It flashes on and off; sometimes you experience it, and sometimes you do not experience it but you are in it, so there is a journey between dharmakaya and luminosity. Generally around the fifth week there comes a basic understanding of the five tathagatas, and these visions actually happen, not in terms of art at all. One is not exactly aware of their presence, but an abstract quality begins to develop, purely based on energy. When energy becomes independent, complete energy, it begins to look at itself and perceive itself, which transcends the ordinary idea of perception. It is as though you walk because you know you do not need any support; you walk unconsciously. It is that kind of independent energy without any self-consciousness, which is not at all fantasy—but then again, at the same time, one never knows.

The Nature of the Visions

The visions that develop in the bardo state, and the brilliant colors and sounds that come along with the visions, are not made out of any kind of substance which needs maintenance from the point of view of the perceiver, but they just happen, as expression of silence and expression of emptiness. In order to perceive them properly, the perceiver of these visions cannot have fundamental, centralized ego. Fundamental ego in this case is that which causes one to meditate or perceive something.

If there were a definite perceiver, one could have a revelation of a god or external entity, and that perception could extend almost as far as a nondualistic level. Such perception becomes very blissful and pleasant, because there is not only the watcher but also something more subtle, a basic spiritual entity, a subtle concept or impulse, which looks outward. It begins to perceive a beautiful idea of wideness and openness and blissfulness, which invites the notion of oneness with the universe. This feeling of the openness and wideness of the cosmos could become very easy and comfortable to get into. It is like returning to the womb, a kind of security. Because of the inspiration of such union, the person becomes loving and kind naturally, and speaks in beautiful language. Quite possibly some form of divine vision could be perceived in such a state, or flashes of light or music playing, or some presence approaching.

In the case of such a person who relates to himself and his projections in that way, it is possible that in the after-death period of the bardo state he might be extremely irritated to see the visions of the tathagatas, which are not dependent on his perception. The visions of the tathagatas do not ask for union at all, they are terribly hostile; they are just there, irritatingly there because they will not react to any attempts to communicate.

The first vision that appears is the vision of the peaceful divinities; not peacefulness in the sense of the love-and-light experience we have just been talking about, but of completely encompassing peace, immovable, invincible peace, the peaceful state that cannot be challenged, that has no age, no end, no beginning. The symbol of peace is represented in the shape of a circle; it has no entrance, it is eternal.

Not only in the bardo experience after death alone, but also during our lifetime, similar experiences occur constantly. When a person is dwelling on that kind of union with the cosmos—everything is beautiful

and peaceful and loving—there is the possibility of some other element coming in, exactly the same as the vision of the peaceful divinities. You discover that there is a possibility of losing your ground, losing the whole union completely, losing your identity as yourself, and dissolving into an utterly and completely harmonious situation, which is, of course, the experience of the luminosity. This state of absolute peacefulness seems to be extremely frightening, and there is often the possibility that one's faith might be shaken by such a sudden glimpse of another dimension, where even the concept of union is not applicable any more.

There is also the experience of the wrathful divinities. They are another expression of peacefulness, the ruthless, unyielding quality, not allowing side-tracks of any kind. If you approach them and try to reshape the situation they throw you back. That is the kind of thing that continually happens with emotions in the living situation. Somehow the feeling of unity where everything is peaceful and harmonious does not hold final truth, because whenever there is a sudden eruption of energies in terms of passion or aggression or any conflict, suddenly something wakes you up; that is the wrathful quality of the peacefulness. When you are involved in ego-manufactured, comforting situations of any kind, the actual reality of the nakedness of mind and the colorful aspect of emotions will wake you up, possibly in a very violent way, as a sudden accident or sudden chaos.

Of course there is always the possibility of ignoring these reminders and continuing to believe the original idea. So the concept of leaving the body and entering the luminosity, then waking up from the luminosity and perceiving these visions in the third bardo state could be seen symbolically as being delivered into that open space—space without even a body to relate to, such open space that you cannot have the notion of union because there is nothing to be united with or by. But there are flashes of energy floating, which could be either diverted or channeled in; that is the definition of mind in this case, the gullible energy which could be diverted into another situation or turned into a rightful one. The possibility of freeing oneself into the sambhogakaya level of the five tathagata realms depends on whether or not there is any attempt to go on playing the same game constantly.

At the same time as these vivid and colorful experiences, there is also the playing back of the six realms of the bardo experience. The perception of the six realms and the perception of the five tathagatas are one

state, but they have different styles. It seems that the perceiver of the tathagatas, this kind of mind, has tremendous ability to keep the link between physical body and mind, very spontaneously. There is no division between the spirituality of the mind and the spirituality of the body; they are both the same, so there is no conflict.

The book says that the first time you awaken from the unconscious absorption in the body, you have a visual experience, minute and precise and clear, luminous and terrifying, rather like seeing a mirage in a spring field, and also you hear a sound which is like a thousand thunders roaring simultaneously. In the mental state there is a looseness and detached feeling, while at the same time overloaded with intelligence, as though the person had a head without a body, a gigantic head floating in space. So the actual visual experience of this bardo state, the preparation for perceiving the visions of the tathagatas, is clear and intelligent and luminous, but at the same time intangible, not knowing where you are exactly; and that sensual experience is also happening in the audible sphere, a deep sound roaring in the background, earth-shaking, but at the same time there is nothing to vibrate. Similar experiences can also happen in life, although the absence of a physical body makes the bardo experience more clear and more hallucinatory. In a life situation there is not the extreme aspect of the mirage, but there is a basically desolate quality, loneliness and flickering, when the person begins to realize that there is no background area to relate to as ego. That sudden glimpse of egolessness brings a kind of shakiness.

The First Day

It says in this book that having woken up, after four days of unconsciousness, into the luminosity there is a sudden understanding that this is the bardo state, and at that very moment the reverse of samsaric experience occurs. This is the perception of light and images, which are the reverse of body or form; instead of being a tangible situation of form it is an intangible state of quality.

Then you get the dazzling light, which is a link of communication between body and intelligence. Although one is absorbed into the state of luminosity, there is still some intelligence operating, sharp and pre-

cise, with a dazzling quality. So the psychophysical body and also the intelligence, the intellectual mind, are transformed into space.

In this case the color of space is blue, and the vision that appears is Vairochana. Vairochana is described as the buddha who has no back and front; he is panoramic vision, all-pervading with no centralized notion. So Vairochana is often personified as a meditating figure with four faces, simultaneously perceiving all directions. He is white in color, because that perception does not need any other tinge, it is just the primordial color, white. He is holding a wheel with eight spokes, which represents transcending the concepts of direction and time. The whole symbolism of Vairochana is the decentralized notion of panoramic vision; both center and fringe are everywhere. It is complete openness of consciousness, transcending the skandha of consciousness.

Along with that there is a vision of the realm of the gods. The depth of the blue is terrifying because there is no center to hold on to, but the glimpse of the white light is like seeing a lamp burning in darkness, and one tends to walk toward it.

The realm of the gods also happens in our daily life experiences. Whenever we are absorbed in a spiritual state, a trancelike state of joy and pleasure, involved in our own self and its projections, whenever that joy comes there is also the possibility of its opposite, the centerless, all-pervading quality of Vairochana. It is extremely irritating, not at all attractive because there is nothing to indulge in, no basic ground in which we can enjoy ourselves. It is all very well to have a panoramic vision of openness, but if there is no one to perceive it, it is terrible from the point of view of ego. The contrast between the realm of the gods and Vairochana constantly happens in life, and often the choice is left to us, whether we should cling to a centralized source of spiritual pleasure, or whether we should let go into pure openness without a center.

This experience comes from aggression, because aggression holds us back and keeps us away from seeing Vairochana. Aggression is a definite, solid thing; when we are in a state of complete anger it is like imagining ourselves to be a porcupine, putting out everything possible to protect ourselves. There is no room for panoramic vision; we do not want to have four faces at all, we hardly even want to have one eye. It is very centralized and completely introverted, that is why anger might make us run away from the expansive quality of Vairochana.

The Second Day

Transcending the water element, the white light begins to dawn, and in the east, the Realm of Complete Joy, the tathagata Vajrasattva or Akshobhya appears.

Akshobhya means immovable, and *Vajrasattva* means vajra being; they both indicate toughness, solidness. In Indian mythology vajra is the most precious jewel, or the thunderbolt, which destroys all other weapons and jewels, which can cut diamond. There was a certain sage who meditated on Mount Meru for centuries, and when he died his bones were transformed into vajra, and Indra, the king of the gods, discovered this and made his weapon out of it, a vajra with a hundred points. The vajra has three qualities: it can never be used frivolously, it always fulfills its function of destroying the enemy, and it always returns into your hand. It is indestructible, adamantine.

The tathagata Vajrasattva-Akshobhya is holding a five-pointed vajra—this absolutely solid object, and he is sitting on an elephant throne—what could be more solid than that? His consort is Buddha-Lochana, the Buddha Eye. In the Buddhist tradition there are five types of eyes: the bodily eye, the buddha eye, the wisdom eye, the heavenly eye, and the dharma eye. In this case the buddha eye refers to awakening. You may have a very solid, stable situation, but if you have no outlet it can stagnate. The feminine principle automatically opens out, she provides the exit or activation of the whole thing, the element of communication from solidness into a flowing, living situation.

He is accompanied by the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, the Essence of Earth, who represents any kind of fertility and growth, also an expression of that particular buddha. And he is also accompanied by Maitreya, the Loving One. That firmness, solid and fertile at the same time, needs emotion as well in order to give life to the solidity; it is the emotional, compassionate quality of love, not necessarily selfless compassion.

Then there are the female bodhisattvas: Lasya is the bodhisattva of dance or mudra, she is more performer than dancer, the offering goddess who displays the beauty and dignity of the body; she shows the majesty and seductiveness of the feminine principle. And Pushpa is the goddess of flowers, the bodhisattva of vision, sight, the scenery.

Transcending the skandha of form, are mirrorlike rays, white and glittering, clear and precise, which shine from the heart of Vajrasattva and

his consort. Along with that there is the light of hell, gray light without brilliance. When the person perceives such a display of the vajra quality it seems too complicated to work with, so there is a possibility of simplifying it into the gray light, associated with hell or a fundamental notion of paranoia which is always connected with the intellectual vajra quality. In order to have intellectual understanding you have to see what is wrong with everything rather than what is right; that is the natural vajra intellectual quality, the critical attitude of the logical mind, which also brings solidity. If you have an understanding of something founded on the logic of a critical attitude, then your wisdom is based on extremely solid and definite ground; it is unshakeable. But the other aspect of it is the realm of hell, when the critical attitude does not relate to solidity or basic sanity of any kind, but sets off a chain reaction, an alarm clock so to speak, of paranoia.

THE THIRD DAY

In the process of this sequence of days, the dharmadhatu quality of Vairochana has provided space, and the quality of Vajrasattva-Akshobhya has provided solidity. Now the vision of Ratnasambhava is described. Ratnasambhava is the central figure of the ratna family, which consists of richness and dignity, the expansion of wealth into other areas, fundamentally solid, rich and expansive. The negative aspect of ratna quality is taking advantage of richness in order to march into other territories, expanding into whatever space exists, overemphasizing generosity to the point where there is a blockage of communication.

Ratnasambhava is yellow in color, which represents the earth; fertility in the sense of wealth and richness. He is holding the wish-fulfilling gem, which also means the absence of poverty. And Mamaki, his consort, represents water; in order to have rich, fertile soil the earth needs water.

The bodhisattva Akashagarbha is the Essence of Space. With such rich ground you also need space to create perspective. And there is Samantabhadra, the All-Good, who is the basic strength, the organic quality of the whole mandala of the ratna family. According to the traditional way of finding appropriate locations to build a home or a monastery or cultivate a new field (which was quite possibly developed by the Bön

tradition of Tibet), you do not build a house merely at random, but there are psychological factors involved. There should be the open feeling of the east, and the luscious feeling of the south with brooks and rivers, and the fortifying feeling of the west with rocks, and the protective feeling of the north with its mountain ranges. There is also a way of water divining by looking at the shape of the land, and next to the spring of water there is usually a spot which is not swampy but has a good rocky foundation to build a house. That particular rocky substance, surrounded by such appropriate shapes and locations, is called Samantabhadra, the soil Samantabhadra. Samantabhadra is also associated with aspiration and positive thinking, a basic confidence and positive way of looking at the future.

Ratnasambhava is accompanied by the female bodhisattva Mala, the goddess who offers all sorts of adornments, garlands, necklaces, bracelets, and so on, to bring out the highlights of the earthy quality of ratna. The other female bodhisattva is Dhupa, the goddess who carries incense. She represents smell, scent, the environmental situation that earth creates; the fresh air, air without pollution, and the room for vegetation to grow and rivers to run.

The light associated with the ratna family is the yellow light of equanimity, nondiscriminating light. But it seems as though all that detail and richness of the ratna mandala is too elaborate, too majestic, so there is a possibility that one would rather run into a very simple and self-satisfied little corner, and that little area is pride, the dim light of the human world.

The Fourth Day

On the fourth day there is the purified element of fire, represented by Amitabha, the padma family. Amitabha means boundless light, and the basic quality of padma is magnetizing, seductive, invitingly warm, open, and compassionate. The light is boundless because it just shines naturally, it does not ask for any reward. It has the nature of fire, not in the sense of aggression, but of consuming any substance without rejecting or accepting.

He is holding a lotus in his hand, which means the same thing: the lotus opens when the sun or the moon shines on it, it opens toward the

light, so any situation coming from outside is accepted. It also has the quality of complete purity; such compassion could grow in mud or dirt but the flower is completely perfect and clean. Sitting on a peacock seat is again openness and acceptance; in mythology the peacock is supposed to be fed on poison, and its beautiful colors are formed from eating poison. It is openness which extends so far that it can deal with any kind of negative situation, in fact compassion is exhilarated by negative situations.

His consort Pandaravasini, the White-clad One, is associated with the symbolism of an Indian legend of certain clothes woven from stone, which could only be cleaned by fire. She represents the essence of fire, consuming everything, and also the result of the consuming process, purification, complete compassion.

Then there is the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the essence of compassion, he who sees in all directions, which is the ultimate intelligence of compassion. Whenever compassion is needed it happens naturally, it has a sharp, automatic quality; it is not idiot or blind compassion, but intelligent compassion which always fulfills its function. Manjushri too represents the mechanical aspect of compassion, but here it is an intellectual rather than a purely impulsive quality. He is also the creator of sound, the communication of compassion; he represents the sound of emptiness which is the source of all words.

Then there is Gita, the female bodhisattva of song, who sings to the music of Manjushri; and along with her is Aloka, who holds a lamp or torch. The whole process of compassion has rhythm and light, it has the depth of intelligence and the sharpness of efficiency, and it has the purifying nature of the white-clad buddha as well as the infinite, all-pervading quality of Amitabha.

That is the complete padma family, which transcends the skandha of perception and shines with the red light of discriminating-awareness wisdom. Compassion is very detailed and precise, so it is necessary to have discriminating-awareness wisdom, which does not mean discriminating in terms of acceptance and rejection, but simply seeing things as they are.

In this book it is associated with the realm of the hungry ghosts; there is some conflict here, because passion is usually connected with the human realm. All these padma qualities, sharpness and precision and depth and majesty, have been found too overwhelming, and somehow

one would like to play a game of deaf and dumb; one would like to sneak away from that complete picture into the sidetracks of ordinary passions.

The Fifth Day

On the fifth day there is the karma family, which is the pure quality of air or wind. It is a green light; the color of envy. From the Realm of Accumulated Actions the tathagaa Amoghasiddhi appears. The karma family is associated with action and fulfillment and efficiency. It is powerful and nothing can stand in its way, therefore it is regarded as destructive. Amoghasiddhi means accomplishing all actions, all powers.

He is holding a crossed vajra in his hand. The vajra is a symbol of fulfilling all actions, tough and indestructible, as we saw in the vajra family. The crossed vajra represents the area of all activities completely perceived in all directions, panoramic fulfillment; often it is described as a multicolored vajra.

He is sitting on a seat of shang-shang, a kind of garuda; this particular type of garuda is a musician, he holds two cymbals in his hands and plays them as he carries Amoghasiddhi on his back. It is again a very powerful image and a symbol of fulfillment, a kind of super-bird, a transcendental bird who can fly and cover all areas, encompassing all space.

His consort is Samaya-Tara, the Savior of Sacred Word or Samaya. There are different interpretations of samaya in the tantric teachings, but in this case it is the actual fulfillment of the living situation at that moment.

Then there is the bodhisattva Vajrapani, which means the Vajra-holder. Again it symbolizes tremendous energy; he is the bodhisattva of energy. And also Sarvanivaranaviskambhin, the Purifier of all Hindrances. If any hindrance happens in the process of karmic action, it comes from misunderstanding or inability to be in contact with the actual living situation, so the bodhisattva clears away these hindrances. In other words, this karma family contains both the absence of any hindrance, and the power of fulfillment.

Then there are the female bodhisattvas Gandha and Naivedya. Gandha is the bodhisattva of perfume, she carries essence made out of all sorts of herbs, which represents the sense-perceptions or feelings; in order to have efficient skillful activity you need developed sense-percep-

tion. Naivedya offers food, the food of meditation which nourishes skillful action.

The karma family transcends the skandha of concept, and is connected with the realm of the jealous gods. Again, as in any experience of wisdom as opposed to confusion, they both have the same quality. In this case they both have the quality of occupation, but wisdom completely covers the ground of all possibilities, seeing all possible ways of dealing with the situation in terms of subject and object, energy, texture, temperament, speed, space, and so on, whereas confusion has a very limited way of dealing with situations, because it has never expanded itself or developed at all. Confusion is underdeveloped wisdom, primitive wisdom, while wisdom is completely developed.

The Sixth Day

Next there is a crescendo of all the forty-two peaceful divinities. The five tathagatas, the four guardians of the gates, the four goddesses and the six realms of the world appear simultaneously. We have a situation of basic bewilderment within which the five tathagatas fill up all the space, all the directions, as well as any corners of emotional situations; there is no gap, no escape or sidetrack of any kind, because the four gates are also guarded by the four types of herukas.

The eastern gatekeeper is known as the Victorious One, which is connected with pacifying, but he appears in a wrathful form to provide an awe-inspiring situation at the gate, so that you do not even think of getting out. He represents the indestructible, invincible quality of peace, that is why he is victorious.

Then the second one, in the southern gate, is the Enemy of Yama the Lord of Death. He is associated with the karmic activity of increasing wealth. Wealth in terms of time and space is very limited, rationed, so he who goes beyond that limitation is the Lord of the Lord of Death.

In the western gate is the Horse-headed Hayagriva. He is the equivalent of an alarm system, as the neigh of the horse can wake you up in any unprepared situations. It is connected with magnetizing, which is a kind of intelligent passion, so that you do not get involved in passion but it wakes you up.

In the northern gate is Amritakundali, the Coil of Amrita or antideath

potion. He is particularly associated with death. If there is any suicidal impulse of giving up hope, the antideath medicine revives you; suicide is not the answer at all. You have the peaceful presence of victory, the increasing one which conquers any extreme concept of time and space, the magnetizing principle which sends out an alarm, and the suicidal principle which gives you the antideath potion. Fundamentally you are completely locked in without any sidetracks.

Moreover, there are the female principles of the gatekeepers. There is the female principle with a hook, to catch you like a fish if you try to run away. Or if you try to escape in terms of pride, to fill up all the space and not allow any other possibilities, the goddess with a lasso ties you from head to toe leaving you without any chance to expand. Another possibility is to run away through passion which is based on speed, but then the goddess with the chain chains you down so that you cannot move your feet and run away. And if you try to frighten anybody by aggression and make your way out, then the goddess with a very loud bell subdues your loud scream of aggression and your deep voice of anger.

Then you are reduced to facing the six realms of the world: the buddha of the gods, the buddha of the jealous gods, the buddha of the human beings, the buddha of the animals, the buddha of the hungry ghosts, and the buddha of the hell realm. All these visions appear from your heart center, which is associated with emotion, passion, and pleasure.

The Seventh Day

Next, the vidyadharas begin to shine out from the throat center, which is the essence of the communication principle. The peaceful divinities are associated with the heart, and the wrathful divinities with the brain. Speech is the link of communication between the two, which is the vidyadharas. Vidyadhara means holder of knowledge or insight. They are not quite peaceful and not quite wrathful, but intermediary; they are impressive, overpowering, majestic. They represent the divine form of the tantric guru, possessing power over the magical aspects of the universe.

At the same time, the green light of the animal realm appears, symbolizing ignorance which needs the teaching of the guru to enlighten it.

The Wrathful Deities

Now the principles of the five tathagatas are transformed into the herukas and their consorts. The basic qualities of the families continue, but now they are expressed in a very dramatic, theatrical way; this is the energy of vajra, padma, and so on, rather than just their basic qualities. The herukas have three heads and six arms. The symbolical meaning behind this is the power of transmutation, expressed in the mythical story of the subjugation of Rudra.

Rudra is someone who has achieved complete egohood. There were two friends studying under a teacher, and their teacher said that the essence of his teaching was spontaneous wisdom; even if a person were to indulge himself in extreme actions, they would become like clouds in the sky and be freed by fundamental spontaneity. The two disciples understood it entirely differently. One of them went away and began to work on the spontaneous way of relating to his own characteristics, positive and negative, and became able to free them spontaneously without forcing anything, neither encouraging nor suppressing them. The other one went away and built a brothel, and organized a big gang of his friends who all acted in a spontaneous way, making raids on the nearby villages, killing the men and carrying off the women.

After some time they met again, and both were shocked by each other's kind of spontaneity, so they decided to go and see their teacher. They both presented their experience to him, and he told the first that his was the right way, and the second that his was the wrong way. But the second friend could not bear to see that all his effort and energy had been condemned, so he drew a sword and killed the teacher on the spot. When he himself died he had a succession of incarnations, five hundred as scorpions, five hundred as jackals and so on, and eventually he was born in the realm of the gods as Rudra.

He was born with three heads and six arms, with fully grown teeth and nails. His mother died as soon as he was born, and the gods were so horrified that they took both him and the body of his mother to a charnel ground and put them in a tomb. The baby survived by sucking his mother's blood and eating her flesh, so he became very terrifying and healthy and powerful. He roamed around the charnel ground, and began to control all the local ghosts and deities and create his own kingdom just as before, until he had conquered the whole threefold universe.

At that time his former teacher and his fellow student had already attained enlightenment, and they thought they should try to subjugate him. So Vajrapani manifested himself as Hayagriva, a wrathful red figure with a horse's head, and uttered three neighs to proclaim his existence in the kingdom of Rudra. Then he entered Rudra's body by his anus, and Rudra was extremely humiliated; he acknowledged his subjugation and offered his body as a seat or a vehicle. All the attributes of Rudra and the details of his royal costume, the skull crown, skull cap, bone ornaments, tiger-skin shirt, human-skin shawl and elephant-skin shawl, armor, pair of wings, crescent moon in his hair, and so on, were transmuted into the heruka costume.

First there is the Great Heruka who is not associated with any of the five families, he is the space between the five families. The Great Heruka creates the basic energy of all the wrathful herukas, and then come the Buddha Heruka, Vajra Heruka, Ratna Heruka, Padma Heruka, and Karma Heruka with their respective consorts. They represent the outrageous, exuberant quality of energy which cannot be challenged. Fundamentally the quality of the five families is a peaceful state, open and passive, because it is completely stable and nothing can disturb it; the tremendous power of that peaceful state manifests as wrathful. It is often described as compassionate anger, anger without hatred.

Then there are the gauris, another type of wrathful energy. The five herukas are the existence of energy as it is, while the gauris are activating energy. The white gauri dances on a corpse, her activity is to extinguish thought processes, therefore she holds a mace of a baby's corpse. Generally a corpse symbolizes the fundamental neutral state of being; a body without life is the state without any active thoughts, good or bad, the nondualistic state of mind. Then the yellow goddess holds a bow and arrow because she has achieved the unity of skillful means and knowledge; her function is to bring them together. And then there is the red gauri holding a banner of victory made out of the skin of a sea monster. The sea monster symbolizes the principle of samsara, which cannot be escaped; the goddess holding it as a banner means that samsara is not rejected but accepted as it is. Then in the north is Vetali, black in color, holding a vajra and a skull cup because she symbolizes the unchanging quality of dharmata. The vajra is indestructible, and the skull cup is another symbol of skillful means. We do not have to go through all of them in detail, but just to give a basic idea of these gauris and messengers

connected with the wrathful mandala, each particular figure has a function in fulfilling a particular energy.

The wrathful deities represent hope, and the peaceful deities represent fear. Fear in the sense of irritation, because the ego cannot manipulate them in any way; they are utterly invincible, they never fight back. The hopeful quality of wrathful energy is hope in the sense of a perpetual creative situation, seen as it really is, as basic neutral energy which continues constantly, belonging neither to good nor bad. The situation may seem overwhelming and beyond your control, but there is really no question of controlling or being controlled. The tendency is to panic, to think you can keep control; it is like suddenly realizing that you are driving very fast, so you put the brake on, which causes an accident. The gauris' function is to come between body and mind. Mind in this case is the intelligence, and body is the impulsive quality, like panicking, which is a physical action. The gauris intervene between intelligence and action, they cut the continuity of the self-preservation of the ego; that is their wrathful quality. They transmute destructive energy into creative energy. Just as the body of Rudra was transformed into the heruka, so the force behind the impulsive quality of panic or action is transmuted.

The Dying Person

It seems that in the Tibetan culture people do not find death a particularly irritating or difficult situation, but here in the West we often find it extremely difficult to relate to it. Nobody tells us the final truth. It is such a terrible rejection, a fundamental rejection of love, that nobody is really willing to help a dying person's state of mind.

It seems necessary, unless the dying person is in a coma or cannot communicate, that he should be told he is dying. It may be difficult to actually take such a step, but if one is a friend or a husband or wife, then this is the greatest opportunity of really communicating trust. It is a delightful situation, that at last somebody really cares about you, somebody is not playing a game of hypocrisy, is not going to tell you a lie in order to please you, which is what has been happening throughout your whole life. This comes down to the ultimate truth, it is fundamental trust, which is extremely beautiful. We should really try to generate that principle.

Actually relating with the dying person is very important, telling him that death is not a myth at that point, but that it is actually happening. "It is actually happening, but we are your friends, therefore we are watching your death. We know that you are dying and you know that you are dying, we are really meeting together at this point." That is the finest and best demonstration of friendship and communication, it presents tremendously rich inspiration to the dying person.

You should be able to relate with his bodily situation, and detect the subtle deterioration in his physical senses, sense of communication, sense of hearing, facial expression, and so on. But there are people with tremendously powerful will who can always put on a smile up to the last minute of death, trying to fight off their old age, trying to fight the deterioration of their senses, so one should be aware of that situation also.

Just reading the *Bardo Thödröl* does not do very much, except that the dying person knows that you are performing a ceremony of some kind for him. You should have some understanding of the whole thing, not just reading out of the book but making it like a conversation: "You are dying, you are leaving your friends and family, your favorite surroundings will no longer be there, you are going to leave us. But at the same time there is something which continues, there is the continuity of your positive relationship with your friends and with the teaching, so work on that basic continuity, which has nothing to do with the ego. When you die you will have all sorts of traumatic experiences, of leaving the body, as well as your old memories coming back to you as hallucinations. Whatever the visions and hallucinations may be, just relate to what is happening rather than trying to run away. Keep there, just relate with that."

While you are doing all this, the intelligence and consciousness of the dying person are deteriorating, but at the same time he also develops a higher consciousness of the environmental feeling; so if you are able to provide a basic warmth and a basic confidence that what you are telling him is the truth rather than just what you have been told to tell him, that is very important.

It should be possible to give some kind of simple explanation of the process of deterioration from earth into water, water into fire, and so on, this gradual deterioration of the body, finally ending up in the luminosity principle. In order to bring the person into a state of luminosity you need

the basic ground to relate with it, and this basic ground is the solidness of the person. "Your friends know you are going to die, but they are not frightened by it, they are really here, they are telling you that you are going to die, there is nothing suspicious going on behind your back." Fully being there is very important when a person dies. Just relating with nowness is extremely powerful, because at that point there is uncertainty beyond the body and the mind. The body and brain are deteriorating, but you are relating with that situation, providing some solid ground.

As far as the visions of the peaceful and wrathful divinities are concerned, it seems to be very much left to the individual to relate with them himself. In the book it says that you should try to conjure up the spirit of the dead person and tell him about the images; you may be able to do that if there is still continuity, but it is very much guesswork as far as ordinary people are concerned; there is no real proof that you have not lost touch with the person. The whole point is that when you instruct a dying person you are really talking to yourself. Your stability is part of the dying person, so if you are stable then automatically the person in the bardo state will be attracted to that. In other words, present a very sane and solid situation to the person who is going to die. Just relate with him, just open to each other simultaneously, and develop the meeting of the two minds.

Orderly Chaos

The Mandala Principle

EDITED BY

Sherab Chödzin Kohn

Editor's Foreword

THE TEACHING OF THE Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche is that of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Buddhism in Tibet, which comprises three major yanas, or vehicles: hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana, or tantra. The culmination of the view, practice, and action of this teaching lies in the vajrayana. Therefore, in the vajrayana lies its greatest power and ultimate expression.

In these two seminars the Vidyadhara presents fundamental aspects of the vajrayana principle of mandala. Though speaking to an audience composed largely of beginners and near beginners, he was bent on uttering the victory cry of the ultimate view. He wanted to give students who were or might be joining him an impression of the full depth and vastness of the teaching of his lineage. Conveying this to beginners meant bypassing the sophisticated apparatus of traditional Buddhist terms usually employed in describing this material. It meant condensing many layers of meaning into simple images, developing a sense of mandala on the spot using the language of everyday life in the West.

In introducing the mandala principle, the Vidyadhara asks the student to relate to a sense of totality that transcends "this and that." "This and that" is an ordinary expression employed by the Vidyadhara in a profound sense. You might ask someone what they talked about in a conversation and get the reply "this and that" or "one thing and another." To highlight the qualities of any "this," you have to contrast it with some "that." Contrasting "this" with "that" is the essence of ego's illusory game of duality, which it deliberately uses to obscure the total vision connected with the mandala principle.

Most fundamentally, "this" as opposed to "that" is ego, or self, as opposed to "other." "Other" can be whatever the self is defining itself against at a given moment. Often people call that "the world" or "out there." Sometimes when talking about "this and that," in saying "this," the Vidyadhara would put his hand on his chest to betoken the sense of self.

There are infinite variations to the this-and-that game. Ego continuously uses these to maintain itself. Sometimes "this" is projected as overstuffed and hopeless and "that" as a roomy saving grace (as in, "Let's get out of here!"). The primary example is regarding all of "this" as samsara and opposing it to nirvana, the salvational "that" or somewhere-else. In fear or anger one is so trapped in the solidity of "this" that all of "that" becomes a threat. In fear one seeks to avoid "that," in anger to destroy it. From the ultimate point of view of ego, it does not matter how projections of this and that are shaped, weighted, and colored. All that matters is that the illusion of this and that is maintained any way at all. In this cynical Realpolitik, which is ego's ultimate insight, it comes ironically close to the total vision of mandala.

It was the Vidyadhara's incomparable genius to convey the most recondite teachings in everyday terms on the spot. The two seminars presented here are excellent examples. A reader looking for conventional conceptual sequences may at times be disappointed. He will, however, find ample consolation in an inexhaustible treasure-stream of experiential bull's-eyes.

In editing this difficult material from the recorded tapes, I have had the good fortune to be able to consult a version prepared in 1976 by members of the New York City group of the Vidyadhara's students. I have found this helpful and would like to express my gratitude to those early editors.

SHERAB CHÖDZIN KOHN
Nova Scotia, 1990

Part One

MANDALA OF UNCONDITIONED ENERGY

Karmê Chöling, 1972

ONE

Orderly Chaos

It seems there has been a lot of misunderstanding in the way the basic principle of mandala has been presented to people. Therefore, it is worth working further on the idea of mandala—what is mandala, why is mandala, how is mandala. This involves working with our life situation, our basic existence, our whole being.

To begin with, we should discuss the idea of orderly chaos, which is the mandala principle. It is orderly, because it comes in a pattern; it is chaos, because it is confusing to work with that order.

The mandala principle includes the mandala of samsara and the mandala of nirvana, which are equal and reciprocal. If we do not understand the samsaric aspect of mandala, there is no nirvanic aspect of mandala at all.[1]

The idea of orderly chaos is that we are confused methodically. In other words, the confusion is intentional. It is intentional in that we deliberately decide to ignore ourselves. We decide to boycott wisdom and enlightenment. We want to get on with our trips, with our passion, aggression, and so forth. Because of that, we create a mandala, a self-existing circle. We create ignorance deliberately, then we create perception, consciousness, name and form, sense-consciousness, touch, feeling, desire, copulation, the world of existence, birth, old age, and death.[2] That is how we create mandala in our daily existence as it is.

I would like to present the mandala principle from this everyday angle so that it becomes something workable rather than something purely philosophical or psychological, a Buddhist version of theology.

From this point of view, orderly chaos is orderly, because we create the groundwork of this mandala. We relate to it as the ground on which we can play our game of hypocrisy and bewilderment. This game is usually known as ignorance, which is threefold: ignorance of itself, ignorance born within, and the ignorance of compulsion, or ignorance of immediate measure. (In the third ignorance, having developed a sense of separation from the ground, there is a feeling that we immediately have to do something about it.)

Since mandala is based on our ignorance and confusion, there is no point in discussing it unless we know who we are and what we are. That is the basis for discussing mandala. There is no point in discussing divinities, talking about which ones are located in which part of mandala diagrams, and about the principles that might quite possibly awaken us from our confusion into the awakened state.[3] It would be ludicrous to discuss those things at this point—completely out of the question. We have to know first what mandala is, why mandala is, and why such a notion as the notion of enlightenment exists at all.

The idea of enlightenment is born out of confusion. Because somebody is confused, there is the other aspect that contrasts with that confusion, which is enlightenment. We have to approach this scientifically: if confusion exists, then enlightenment exists, therefore confusion exists. We have to work with this polarity.

There is a sense of space, constantly. There is a sense of space, because there is a boundary measuring the space. In other words, if we had some land and we wanted to make a definite statement that it was our land, we would have to put up a fence around it. The fence would mean that this particular area belonged to us and that we wanted to work on that basis. With this approach, we get onto our land, we relate with it, and we begin to possess it. It belongs to us. Then we develop that sense of possession to the point where it is absolutely impossible to work any further in that way. That space of our land becomes solid space: it is *our* land, it completely belongs to *us*. The whole land is *ours*. This sense of *ours* automatically brings possessiveness, clinging to something, holding on to it. Holding on to it means solidifying that land that belongs to us. We concretize it as ours, we make it into concrete land, concrete space. We freeze the whole area.

Consequently, the only thing left to relate with is the boundary, the fence. That is the last hope we have. We begin to look into that as a way

of relating further. Maybe the fence we set up originally might have some space in it. We begin trying to eat up that fence like a worm, seeking territory or spaciousness. Since we have no relationship with our basic space as openness at all, we make the boundary into space. This turns the whole thing upside down, like turning positive film into a negative. Everything black turns white, and everything white turns black. The only way left for us to relate further is based on the hope that the fence might be a spacious one—it might be hollow, not a solid wall. That is how we set up a mandala situation to begin with, with our confused mind.

Unfortunately, there is no point at all in relating with everything as beautiful and glorious, as in a love-and-light trip. That would be totally ludicrous, if I may say so. Impractical. If we are going to freeze the whole area that we have, then we have to relate with some other areas that might be space from that point of view. The proper introduction to mandala is to find out whether we are regarding the mandala as space or whether we are freezing that space and treating the situation around it as open space.

The whole thing could become quite workable. In other words, if nirvana exists, samsara exists equally. Are we going to relate with both together, or are we going to consider nirvana alone as workable and samsara as something we have to reject and destroy? This last kind of simple-minded approach is very confusing and, in fact, self-destructive. And that seems to be the point of relating with the mandala principle in terms of whether we have ground to discuss it at all or not. What is the ground? Is the ground solid space, or is the ground space-space?

Student: I don't understand what a mandala basically is.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is space to create a situation that is based on a territory or boundary. It depends on whether we relate with space as space or space as solid, or with boundary as space or the other way around. That's how it goes.

Student: When you speak about the boundary of the mandala, it sounds like you are talking about the boundary of us or the mandala of us. When we go to explore the boundary of the mandala, is that something like exploring our limits?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That depends on our attitude toward the space, how we see it.

S: I see it as pretty solid.

TR: Then the boundary becomes the space, which brings a tremendous struggle.

S: That comes from separating space and solidity?

TR: It's something like the lost-wax method used by craftsmen. We expect the wax will act as the expression rather than what is inside it. It is exactly the same here. Experience becomes very claustrophobic. Naturally. And then it depends on whether we accept the claustrophobia as it is or not.

S: It becomes claustrophobic in that we are surrounded by a boundary?

TR: Yes.

S: What is it as it is?

TR: Your guess is as good as mine.

S: Are you describing an energy pattern of some kind?

TR: Well, obviously, yes. There is energy involved in dealing with the texture of things as they are. But the question is, are we willing to relate with the space, or are we involved with the boundary? Or are we willing to give up the whole trip of boundary and space and provide the basic ground?

S: Isn't the space the same as the basic ground?

TR: It depends on how you look at it.

Student: Why is the mandala necessary? Can't we get along just as well without it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Sure, we don't have to have a mandala at all, that's true. It is unnecessary. But that in itself becomes a mandala.

S: What does?

TR: The unnecessariness of it becomes a mandala. I mean, it's not a conceptual principle, it's what is. We don't have to call it a mandala or anything else. But it happens there.

S: Is it an organizational energy?

TR: Sure. Anyway, there is some unity there and some pattern in it. The mandala is not important, but the mandala *happens*.

S: Are you saying that when we are relating to space as concrete and trying to eat out from inside the boundary, then we are not seeing the

mandala aspect of things; but when we relate to the open, spacious aspect of it, then we begin to relate to it as a mandala?

TR: It's up to you, purely up to you. There's no philosophical definition of it at all. What we are doing here is not trying to get together set patterns and ideas, ideologies or theologies. We are not trying to develop a set idea of what a mandala is or isn't. We are more trying to relate to what a mandala might be or could be. There is no dogma involved at this point at all. It is more a question of developing a working basis for working together.

S: Is it a way of looking at the world?

TR: I suppose you could say that, yes. But it would be more accurate to say it's a way of seeing it.

S: Is there both a collective mandala and individual mandalas? So that each of us—

TR: Definitely, yes. That's how we perceive the world.

S: Then our own personal mandala is subject to change as we change our consciousness and our way of seeing it.

TR: We don't *change* our consciousness. It's subject to how our consciousness *grows*.

Student: Could we work on creating a mandala for this seminar group?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Sure, but you can't pin down the mandala principle as being this or that. We are discussing a totality in a blade of grass. Where there is grass growing, is that solid grass, or is it hollow grass in the midst of concrete space? Do you see what I mean? Can anyone explain?

S: It's like the figure-and-ground relationship. Is the grass the figure and . . . ?

TR: Yes. Do we describe the grass as outstanding in the midst of space, or do we say that the grass is the space and around the grass is the solidity? Do you see what I mean?

Student: It is more accurate to describe what is by saying a blade of grass is a hollow thing with solidity all around it? Is that more accurate?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think that is more accurate, yes.

Student: Is it like the difference between simply considering a single thing and considering a total situation of the thing?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Both amount to the same thing, because they are interdependent. You can't have just one or the other.

Student: I don't understand what you mean by "giving up the trip of space and providing the basic ground."

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's giving up the whole thing with the interdependent elements—whether grass is the space or whether grass is the object.

S: Giving all that up?

TR: Giving up that *whole* area. Then there is the possibility of some complete working basis. The tantric tradition on the kriyayoga level talks about preparing the mandala with the five ingredients of a cow.[4] The five ingredients are the snot of a cow, shit of a cow, piss of a cow, milk of a cow, and so forth. Clean up the holy ground with those, going beyond discrimination. Clean the ground completely with the five ingredients of a cow, then you can build a mandala on it, or make a sand painting, or just lines. From the tantric point of view, that is the only workable situation—you have destroyed or overcome the hollow space or solid space in order to create the true mandala, the absolute mandala. This is not purely superstition, you know, this kriyayoga idea of the five ingredients of a cow. The cow belongs to the earth. It grazes and sits and shits and eats grass and lives on the land. It has the quality of a sitting bull. And the five ingredients come out of that cow or sitting bull. It's a tremendously powerful thing to smear it over the whole phenomenal world, the snot and milk and piss and shit and everything. It's fantastic! It evens out the whole thing. It's beautiful!

Student: Is the ground the middle path?

Trungpa Rinpoche: No, I wouldn't even say it is the middle path. There's nothing middle about it. It's *the* ground that does not allow any compromise. It's not in the middle—it's *the* ground. It has nothing to do with the middle at all.

S: Could it be just not dwelling on anything?

TR: I suppose you could say that, but let me explain about mandala principle as a whole. It is part of the tantric situation, the tantric approach. We are not discussing Madhyamaka or the shunyata principle.[5] We are discussing the basic existence of things as they are—how we survive, how we live. So the whole thing becomes less philosophical.

There's no middle path involved. There's a total path. This is an absolutely heavy-handed approach to things as they are. There's no middle way at all. It's heavy-handed.

Student: It seems that we haven't even approached the Madhyamaka level properly. How can we work with what you are talking about now without distorting it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We can do so theoretically, but from the point of view of actual practice, we should sit and meditate and work on ourselves in a basic fashion. What we are discussing is the possible chaos that might happen, the orderly chaos that might happen as we go along the path. This seminar could be regarded as a warning session. Somebody who hasn't yet learned how to drive can still study the highway codes and how to relate with motorcars. It is possible that chaos, orderly chaos, might happen in our situation. In that regard, I personally feel that I can trust the American audience composed of those who are on the path or might be on the path. I feel brave enough to tell them what the path is all about. I feel that I can relate with them and explain all the possibilities of order and chaos. I feel telling them about it might create some awakeness on the path. It's a situation of preparing the whole ground rather than purely a matter of immediate instruction. You have to commit yourself to the path and surrender yourself to it. You have to take refuge, become a refugee, to begin with—give up everything. Then you have to be willing to take the responsibility of a bodhisattva.[6] Then after that, you can receive the tantric teachings. But that seems to be a long way off as far as we are concerned. Nevertheless, it is worth discussing the possibility of these situations occurring for all of us.

Student: Does the basic ground come about when you somehow forget about the "this" and the "that," the discrimination? Is that what you are implying?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes.

S: And this is experiential, not just intellectual.

TR: Yes.

S: How do you know when you have experienced it?

TR: It's purely up to you.

S: It seems to me there could be some self-deception.

TR: If you are experiencing things completely and totally, that means that you have worn out your reference point. That is a total experience.

S: Worn out your reference point?

TR: As though you are completely dead, or at least dying. You have no way of referring to anything alive, you are actually dying. It's very solid and very simple.

Student: It seems to me that the most difficult thing to do is to get over a sense of separation. Isn't that what this is about? Interdependence depends on separation, and if you could give that up, then you could relate to a totality. But how does one do that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You don't have to know how to do it. It just happens. There is no special care or "idiot compassion" from the teacher or the teaching. You simply have to work it out. You have to acknowledge that you are a lonely person, a person alone, treading on the path.

S: But doesn't the sense of aloneness or loneliness contradict the idea of totality?

TR: Absolutely not. If you realize that you are a lonely person, then you feel the totality of the whole space in which you are lonely or alone. It amounts to the same thing, absolutely the same thing. You can't feel alone unless you feel the totality of the whole thing. There is no help coming from anywhere at all. You have to make your own individual journey, which is purely based on you. That goes without saying.

S: That's not the same thing as ordinary loneliness then.

TR: There is no such thing as ordinary loneliness. Loneliness is one thing—there is always space.

We are going to introduce discussion groups tomorrow, which could be extraordinarily important at this point. They will provide an opportunity for people to relate with each other and to express their chaos and confusion in terms of the mandala principle. They will be able to open themselves and discuss their ideas.

The situation we have is that our philosophers and yogis are at war. The yogis think the philosophers are bullshitting, and the philosophers think the yogis are bullshitting. As a result, at this point we are unable to establish a total living teaching, which would mean not rejecting either of those. So what we are trying to do is establish some link between the two, so that the approaches of both philosophers and yogis could both be regarded as valid. Some technical or intellectual understanding

is important, and your experiential situation is also important. Working those two together is extraordinarily possible.

The expectation is that eventually I won't have to give any more seminars. You will be able to help yourselves. Not only that, but you will be able to develop American Buddhism, to teach other people, to teach the rest of the world. In fact, you will be able to go back to the Tibetans or the Indians and teach them what their earlier understanding was all about and work with them.

As far as I personally am concerned, I have tremendous trust in your participation in this work, and it means a lot to me that finally we are able to work together on the basic sanity level, that we are able to set up some solid ground enabling you to help your whole world, not purely in terms of religion but also in terms of concrete living situations.

Participation in the discussion groups tomorrow will be an expression of acceptance that we are going to work together, as opposed to your simply being here to pick up something, some spark of knowledge, and take it back home and maybe write a fat book on it. The situation doesn't work that way. It very much needs sharing. So please take part in the discussion groups and also the meditation practice with our community here; that is also part of the seminar. It is very important to give in to the irritations and frustrations that take place in meditation practice. Thank you very much and welcome everybody.

TWO

The Razor's Edge

THE PROBLEM IN DISCUSSING the idea of mandala seems to be that it is extraordinarily abstract. We see it as a metaphysical or philosophical principle, so we cannot learn anything about it unless some emphasis is made on a pragmatic way of looking at the idea of mandala. We have to have some working base or some way of identifying ourselves with the basic mandala principle. We have to see how the mandala principle is connected with a learning process or a practicing process. As has been said already, the only way to do that is to relate with the basic ground in which the mandala exists.

The word *mandala* literally means "association," "society." The Tibetan word for mandala is *kyilkhor. Kyil* means "center," *khor* means "fringe," "gestalt," "area around." It is a way of looking at situations in terms of relativity: if that exists, this exists; if this exists, that exists. Things exist interdependently, and that interdependent existence of things happens in the fashion of orderly chaos.

We have all kinds of orderly chaos. We have domestic orderly chaos and we have the emotional orderly chaos of a love affair. We have spiritual orderly chaos, and even the attainment of enlightenment has an orderly chaos of its own. So it is a question of relating with different types of orderly chaos.

But before discussing the idea of orderly chaos itself, we have to discuss the basic area in which orderly chaos happens. Before we realize something is orderly and before we realize that it is chaos, there is some basic ground on which that chaos is constantly happening in an orderly

fashion, in accordance with its own pattern. This ground is what we are concerned with now in our discussion of mandala. Seeing the ground is connected with how we can wake ourselves up, how we practice, how we relate with the day-to-day situation.

I would like to repeat and make very clear that we cannot discuss the higher mandala principle until we have some realization concerning the samsaric or confused mandala, the confused level of orderly chaos. The basic situation is that we are involved in a sense of struggle in our lives. We are trying to defeat somebody or win somebody over, to get rid of an enemy or acknowledge a friend. Whether we live in the city or in the country, we are trying either to fight with our environment or to indulge in it.

There are all kinds of areas where we are constantly involved with picking and choosing. That is the basic area where the orderly chaos is taking place. Spirituality, from a superficial point of view, is based on the idea of making things harmonious. But somehow, from the point of view of the mandala principle, that approach does not apply. The idea is not so much to make things harmonious and less active, but to relate with what is happening, with whatever struggles and upheavals are going on—trying to survive, to earn more dollars, get more food, more room, more space, a roof over our heads, and so on. If we are living in the city or certain areas in the suburbs, it could be extraordinarily oppressive. Possibilities of rape and murder are taken for granted, and things seem to happen of their own accord. We never know what is the beginning, what is the end, or how to proceed.

As soon as we wake up in the morning, we find that we are ready to fight the world. Having breakfast is a preparation, like taking a magic potion so that we can fight the world. And after having breakfast, we go out and fight the world. There is something interesting and very beautiful about the simplicity of preparing for warfare and then beginning to fight. We either expect to be attacked and defend ourselves or to attack somebody else and have them defend themselves. So we are going to have an encounter that is based on struggle. No matter what our particular mentality is, the total picture is one of struggle—fight, gain, and loss. That kind of basic mentality exists whether we live in a town or in the country. That mentality goes on constantly. The sense of the total environment is one of abstract struggle.

It is not struggle for something particular or on behalf of a particular

syndicate or anything like that; rather there is a total sense of imprisonment. There is a sense that the world has captured us and we have to live with it, we have to fight it as though we were behind iron bars. The sense of imprisonment is always there. That is the basic ground of the mandala, before orderly chaos begins to happen.

There is that total area of depression or excitement, of expressing richness or poverty; something is holding us to that particular place. That fundamental totality of grayness or black-and-whiteness—it depends on the individual—is interesting, extraordinarily beautiful, if I may use such a term. By beautiful, I do not mean something purely pleasurable; I am referring to the fact that the ground is extremely awake, alert. Everybody is alert, willing to fight, willing to attack, willing to make money, willing to struggle with the living situation in whatever way. There is that whole, total energy that we are involved with. There is constantly a sense that something is just about to take place. It is as though some underground gossip network had sent a message around, and everybody has decided to be prepared for the situation. The five-minute warning has already been given, all over the place. There is a kind of tentative flickering of positive and negative possibilities—possible chaos, possible gift of God. We can look at it from either side—possible excitement, possible depression. There is that flickering going on in the background of the whole situation.

The reason I am mentioning this is because that situation is not solid space. It is actual space, and we could feel a sense of "spaceness" all the time. There is some element of free will always there. Even if we feel trapped or compelled to do certain things, nevertheless we feel that the decision and the spaciousness—this sense of space, this sense that something is taking place—belongs to us. Of course, this is a very abstract point, very difficult to grasp.

That total energy—totally creative, totally destructive—is what one might call nowness. Nowness is the sense that we are attuned to what is happening. The past is fiction and the future is a dream, and we are just living on the edge of a razor blade. It is extraordinarily sharp, extraordinarily tentative and quivering. We try to establish ground but the ground is not solid enough, because it is too sharp. We are quivering between that and this.

Living on the razor blade means at the same time living in the total space, because the possibility exists that it might cut us through, destroy

us, and the possibility also exists that we might be able to avoid the razor's cut. But both those possibilities amount to the same thing at this point. The sense of the razor blade's sharpness is very interesting, extraordinarily interesting. That is what we call intelligence, primordial intelligence. We feel that razor blade's sharpness and its cutting quality. We sense that, we feel it, and we also want to run away from it. We would rather sit or perch on something more solid, like a toilet seat, some place where there's no razor blade. But when we are on the razor blade, such an invitation becomes a fantasy. That is our basic intelligence beginning to sense all kinds of areas that are impossible but still somehow possible at the same time. This happens all the time.

It could actually be said to be a gift of God that we have not been presented with a comfortable toilet seat to perch on. Instead we've been presented with a razor blade for a seat. You never perch on a razor blade, you just *be* on it with attentiveness. The razor blade is an expression of the space of all the other areas. It could be that the rest of the areas are threatening and the razor blade is a comfortable space to sit on, or that the other areas are inviting and the razor blade is threatening. Whatever the case may be, there is that sense of being there fully, with nothing tentative about it at all. The whole thing becomes extremely powerful and spacious, and that is the enlightened or transcendental aspect of the mandala.

The enlightened aspect of the mandala and the samsaric, or whirlpool-like, aspect take place on the same razor blade. But actually there is not just one razor blade. The path is full of razor blades, to such an extent that we have nowhere to walk. We might wish for the yogic ability to levitate so that we could avoid these razor blades, but we find that we have not acquired that ability yet. If we had, then quite possibly there would be no razor blades there at all. Being able to levitate and there not being any razor blades amount to the same thing.

This razor-blade quality is something more than psychological irritation. Life as a whole becomes penetratingly sharp—unavoidable and at the same time cutting. We could say that that is the living description of the truth that life contains pain. According to Buddhism, life or existence is defined according to the truth of suffering, which is the razor blade. The truth of the origin of suffering is finding out that there *is* a razor blade. Then there is the truth of the goal, which is connected with seeing the razor blade as the path, or else diminishing the effect of the razor

blade. But we cannot use magical powers at all. We have to face the reality in its fullest truthful nature, straightforwardly.

Student: We are always thinking about the past or dreaming about the future, and it seems you are saying that as our awareness that we are caught up in this process grows, we begin to feel our pain more directly. And instead of trying to do away with it, we have to get into it. We have to just see that that's the way we are, more and more. Is that what you are saying?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The point is not to philosophize. You can say that the effect of our awareness is thus-and-such, therefore if we accept or reject the pain, that's our bad luck. But we don't approach it from that angle. Pain contains a very interesting level of subtlety that we could relate with. To begin with, what do we really mean by pain? Are we talking about physical pain or psychological pain? Physical pain is connected with our attitude toward our body and our attitude toward our environment. In other words, pain contains a mystical experience (if we could use such an expression) within itself. If we relate to pain fully, there is tremendous depth in it. We begin to realize the cutting quality of the razor-edge of the pain, which severs beliefs in this and that. It cuts right through us. When we really and truly experience psychological pain as it is, we have no room at all to create conceptual ideas of this and that. We just experience pain fully and directly.

The point is not just accepting as a philosophy that we should be in a state of equilibrium and consider pain random and just sit on it. There is something more than that—there is an intelligent way of relating to pain. Pain is there because of you, and you try to struggle with the pain over who is going to win: Are you going to win or is the pain going to win? Those battles between you and the pain are unnecessary. If you become the pain completely, then without *you,* pain's function becomes nothing. It is just energy, just sharpness of something. It might still cut through, but it is no longer pain as we know it.

You see, the problem is that we do not experience pain as pain at all. We only experience the *challenge* of the pain, the challenge of whether or not we are going to overcome the pain. That is why we feel pain—because we feel that we are going to lose our territory and the pain is going to take us over. That is where the real pain begins on the ordinary level. So if we give up the struggle and become the pain completely,

fully, then the pain is me and I am the pain. That is exactly what the Buddha meant when he spoke of duhkha as the *truth* of suffering. There is truth in suffering, which is self-existing truth rather than observed truth on a relative level.

Student: Does that mean trusting that the truth of the pain will be transforming?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Somewhat, yes. You could say that it transforms into a sharpness or energy and is no longer pain as a challenge.

Student: Could you explain what the function of masochism or hypochondria is in this connection?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Hypochondria or masochism are still related to the challenge of the battlefield. You still let yourself be challenged, which is not actually identifying with the pain. You're dealing with the fringe alone, and you don't experience the pain in its fullest sense at all.

S: What about asceticism?

TR: Asceticism takes an entirely different approach to pain. Here you have the idea that you are going to benefit from pain, rather than rejecting it, feeling bad about it. That is quite interesting. It is like mothers who enormously enjoy labor pain, because it means something to them. They are going to give birth. Or it is like experiencing or perching on the pain of diarrhea; this experience of pain is worthwhile, because you're going to get rid of your diarrhea, you're going to give birth to something, you're going to clean it completely out of your system and get rid of it. That is the approach to pain that we find in asceticism. It is worthwhile experiencing it: let's do it, let's get through it. But there is something very suspicious about that as well. It is very suspicious when asceticism exists purely for its own sake.

There could also be asceticism as a way of openness and experiencing pain fully. But asceticism is actually transcended at that point. At that point, you just become a simple person, an *anagarika,* which means "homeless one." You can be a true homeless one, or you can also be a false homeless one, because you are still looking for some feedback about having given up your home. That way your homelessness provides a home for you to be in. That is a very subtle point. So true homelessness is just giving up without taking on anything new; it is just

simplifying yourself without questioning what you are going to get in return.

Student: It sounds as if it would be very easy to fall into an approach to pain of congratulating yourself on how much of it you're feeling and seeing.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, yes, that's the whole point. You can regard the pain as pain or you can regard it as part of your projection, which is an entirely different area. If you regard pain as something coming from outside, challenging you from the outside, but still you give in to it, that is suicidal. But if you regard pain as something that is there, that is part of your state of mind, and you take the approach of not feeding the pain anymore, that is another matter altogether.

Student: Since you're saying that pain is there all the time, would that mean that when you're not feeling the pain, the psychological pain, that you're more asleep—that in a sense seeking the painful aspect of a situation would be moving toward being more awake?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, I suppose so. But that is very, very dangerous to say.

S: What about the pain that has to do with the distance I feel between you and me?

TR: That's the same thing again, exactly. You are trying to live with your expectations of how that pain might not come about.

S: Or the pain between the people in the house here.

TR: Yes, it's the same thing. Something is not feeding you, something is not comforting you. You feel that the discomfort is about to take you over and you are trying to fight that, rather than actually being concerned about the distance between you and the object of communication, such as the distance between you and me. That seems to be out of view at the time you are feeling the problem. Your relationship with the pain becomes the problem at that point, because of the pretense of some logic that is hovering about in your state of mind, which really has nothing to do with it, in fact. From that point of view, the problem is that we feel our pain is a problem.

Student: Are you making a distinction between an active and a passive approach to pain? By active, I mean: I'm going to figure out a way of

reacting to this pain so that I can become more aware; and passive would be just feeling it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I don't think there is any difference. It seems to be the same thing, because wherever pain, or duhkha, happens, it always has entirely the same nature, the same style, and the same type of approach. The idea is always: something's just about to take me over, now I have to resist that. And then there is logical mind: this is happening because somebody has ill-treated me or rejected me, or whatever. In fact, that logical mind is a facade. There is the sense that somebody might take me over and the challenge of how to regain my power in terms of my being and my consciousness, my emotions—that seems to be the crucial point. And the logic—such as, he killed my father, therefore I should try to kill him—is actually beside the point. It is just an excuse, in fact. It has nothing to do with the pain at all. The actual pain is that sense that something has to be overcome, to be conquered. In other words, the whole idea of pain is fighting yourself, fighting your concept with your intellect.

Student: I feel that there is real suffering and misery in this world, and all of these things that we've been talking about sometimes feel to me like a thousand-dollar bill that I can't spend to do anything about it. It feels like these points of view don't enable me to do anything actual about pain and suffering in this world.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you could do a lot. The reason why there is the chaos of struggling with pain in the world is that we haven't come to terms with what pain actually is ourselves, personally. If we can come to an understanding of pain in our own innate nature, we will then be dealing with the situation directly, and there will be less pain. The pain becomes purely chaos, orderly chaos.

The pain doesn't have to be there. If you want to stop the war in Vietnam, you have to stop *your* pain, your version of the Vietnam war. You have to relate with your own antagonism, your own innate war between you and your projections. If you solve that problem and relate with that transmutation process, then it will become much easier to solve the problem existing on the diplomatic or international level. That problem then becomes just purely a bundle of instances that occurred on the basis of orderly logic, the end result of which was chaos. It is the same orderly chaos that is happening all the time, and one can handle it

beautifully at that point. The problem now is that we cannot keep track of the situation. We look at national or international things so much in terms of our own projections that we lose track of the actual political situation.

S: On the whole, if we can let go of the reference point of the self and relate with the pain directly, we will end up creating less pain.

TR: I think so, yes. But if you rely on that as a promise or reassurance, you end up destroying the whole thing.

THREE

The Portrait of Confused Mind

WE HAVE DISCUSSED the basic area of sitting on the razor blade, which is the area of passion, aggression, and ignorance. It is the basic area where the samsaric mandala can be established or constructed. We can now go into further details about the samsaric mandala itself.

Sitting on the razor blade in the manner of passion, aggression, and ignorance creates tremendous room for working with the next situation. The way we work with the next situation is not by trying to get rid of anything or to become a better person, but by finally acknowledging our actual situation.

What we discussed in the last talk was the area of the basic styles of all kinds that we evolve in relating with life situations so that we can accommodate mind's neurosis. We have all kinds of styles of perching, sitting on the razor's edge, and we also have developed the style of spiritual materialism, which is constantly trying to substitute one myth for another. Out of that level comes something else that goes beyond that level. There is a definite move in our confused mind, which happens in accordance with the basic character of the mandala: we decide to become deaf and dumb. We decide no longer to be sensitive to what our life situation is all about. In other words, the battlefield situation of fighting against something else is accepted without question. We feel that we have to get our money's worth out of the struggle. We feel we have to continue until we get our reward for that struggle or until we have a sense that the struggle has been fulfilled. We are not going to accept just anything, because we think we are too smart to go along

with things out of blind faith. We think we have to get something out of our situation, gain something. If we are practicing meditation or involved with spirituality, we want to attain enlightenment. We feel that if we do not attain enlightenment, we will have been cheated. And up to the point where it becomes clear that we have been cheated, we are willing to remain deaf and dumb. If we hear that we can attain enlightenment through a meditation practice that consists of standing on our heads twenty-four hours a day, we will do it. We will reduce ourselves to a state of deaf and dumb until we reach the end result and get our money's worth. All the promises that are made to us target this kind of ignorance. We are blinded by the promises, by their glaring, flashing, colorful aspect. We let ourselves be blinded by the promises and go through the pain of being blinded by the promises. We are willing to let ourselves be reduced to a state of deaf and dumb.

That is the ignorance that constitutes the central part of the samsaric mandala. We are willing to give in to everything as long as there are promises that are seemingly worth giving in to. Having heard some "word of wisdom" telling us that it is worthwhile to give in, we forget the experiential path. We walk the path like a blind man. We avoid being sensitive to whatever life situations we encounter on the way.

This ignorance forms the basic structure of the mandala that is the ground for both spiritual and psychological materialism. Spiritual materialism develops because we are willing to take a chance on all kinds of trips, like holding a grain of sand in our hand and meditating on that for three months, or fasting for ten months. We fall for all kinds of promises. It is true, if you keep holding that grain of sand, when the time is up, obviously you will have accomplished that. It is a tremendous accomplishment—you will become an enlightened grain-of-sand holder. That is certainly an accomplishment, undoubtedly.

There is also an element of ordinary psychological materialism that develops as part of the mandala experience. This takes the form that, in order to work toward a goal, we are willing to ignore the nature of the path to it, the eccentricity of that path. For example, in order to become president of the country, you have to go through all kinds of eccentric trips. You have to make all kinds of promises and keep changing your mind back and forth in order to seduce the voters. Whatever you have to do to win, you go through the whole thing and make a fool out of yourself, because if you are willing to make a fool out of yourself, an

absolutely perfect fool, then you get to become president. So there is that kind of bravery, being willing to insert yourself into those kinds of situations and getting involved in their speed. There are all kinds of examples of this. Needless to say, people are quite familiar with this whole approach.

The eccentricity trip that a candidate for president goes through involves believing in the deaf-and-dumb aspect of the journey. We ignore everything except what we come out as in the end when we become president. Whatever we have to go through in the process is acceptable. We reduce ourselves to a state of deaf and dumb. We become hardened, hardened travelers. That can be seen as making us even greater, and we tend to become heroes of some kind because of our hardened quality of being deaf and dumb.

This kind of approach provides the central part of the samsaric mandala. Then there are the four quarters of the mandala.

Aggression is connected with the eastern quarter of the mandala. Aggression in this sense is based on intellect and analytic mind. You cannot become an aggressive person unless you know what to be aggressive about. Being aggressive automatically entails some kind of logic. Whether that logic is logical or illogical makes no difference. Your logic is founded on a platform that you can land on or crash on, which is basic aggression. Aggression involves an extremely severe attitude toward yourself. You are not willing to entertain yourself, enjoy yourself, treat yourself well at all. You constantly have a war going on between that and this, so in order to defeat whatever it may be, you have to be aggressive, pushy; you have to come down heavy and sharp all the time. Whether you are involved in spiritual or psychological materialism, the basic approach is the same. There is a kind of austerity.

We find that many of the aggressive people in history have been very austere. Aggressive people will not let themselves be entertained. They are willing to sacrifice their health and their comfort as part of being aggressive, pushy, penetrating, cutting, destructive. They would rather stick with that than let anyone touch them in a gentle and loving way. If you are such a person, and you get near any loving situation—for example, someone wants to stroke your head—you regard it as an insult: "Don't touch me, I'm on this logic trip. Don't try to mind my business." It is a very individualistic approach. There is no room for compromise, because logic is saying yes or no constantly, all the time.

The southern quarter of the samsaric mandala is connected with pride. It is actually more arrogance or a self-enriching quality than pride in the ordinary sense. Ordinarily, when you say you are a proud person, there is an element of confidence involved. But the pride we are talking about is without dignity or confidence; it is simply self-assertive. It is arrogant in the sense that you are not willing to let yourself be regarded as needing to be rescued or saved. Not only that—you want to be acknowledged. You want people to acknowledge your richness or your potentiality for richness so that you can march into other people's territory. If necessary, you are willing to roll into their territory, expand into it.

The image of this type of arrogance is a gigantic tank of honey being released. Waves and waves of sweet, gooey honey roll in your direction as you relate to an arrogant person of this type. There is no question about it, the honey is going to come. Slow and dignified in its own limited way, it is coming toward you. This is a perverted way of demonstrating richness. There's no room for questioning—this richness simply descends on you. The person might constantly give you rich gifts of food and money. You are presented with gifts until you have to run away from the horror of this generosity. It becomes outrageous, overwhelming, demonic. There is no element of basic intelligence; it is simply heavy-handed. There may be some element of sharing, because that person also needs some comforting, but the approach to that becomes very heavy-handed too. Any sense of comfort or entertainment becomes more than is needed. It becomes uninviting and claustrophobic.

In the western quarter of the mandala is passion, or grasping. This is a mentality of tremendous suction. In relating to a seducer who is manifesting this passion, you get sucked in constantly. Your existence becomes less meaningful, because the existence of the seducer becomes more powerful than yours. You begin to regard yourself as just an insignificant snowflake that automatically melts when you get near the source of this suction. You are completely seduced, reduced to nothing, sucked in. The seduction of this passion asks you to become part of the seducer's territory rather than a partner. There is no element of dance at all. Everything is continuously sucked in. There is no room for love in the sense of free exchange. Love becomes overwhelming. You are reduced to a part of the other person's love rather than having the free choice of making love yourself. Your beauty and dignity and glamour become part of the other person's power of suction. You become just a

grain of metal with this gigantic lump of a magnet drawing you in, and you have no hold on anything. There's no room for questioning. You are completely melted, sucked in.

In many cases, people want something like this to happen, because they actually do regard themselves as insignificant. They want to be loved, they want to be sucked in. But even people who have esteem for themselves as individual entities cannot help themselves once they are confronted with the extraordinarily powerful suction of the western quarter of the mandala.

Next is the northern quarter of the mandala, from which jealousy comes. It is not exactly jealousy; we do not seem to have the proper term in the English language. It is a paranoid attitude of comparison rather than purely jealousy, and this becomes a very heavy-handed factor as you find yourself invited to compare yourself with *that* all the time. This sense of comparison becomes heavy-handed because you see *that* situation as richer than this one. One finds one's own situation lacking and tries to bloat it up like a bloated corpse. There is a logical mentality of comparison. "Since that is bigger than me, I should build myself up until I am much bigger than that." I try to build myself up to the point of being gigantic, huge, so that my sheer size can undermine the competition. So it is more than jealousy; it is a sense of competition.

Again, the game here is one of drawing the other in, rather than undermining or completely absorbing it. You do not want to absorb the object of jealousy, but you want to let it sit there and finally be completely undermined so you can crush it down. The sense of the jealousy says: That thing was bigger than me when we began, but now I'm becoming half its size, now I am its full size, and now I'm slightly bigger, now I'm much bigger, huge. Now I'm huge and great and gigantic and that thing out there has become insignificant for me. Nothing is threatening for me anymore at all.

Those five factors—ignorance in the center, anger in the east, pride in the south, passion in the west, and jealousy in the north—form a complete portrait of our world. From that point of view, we are the ideal mandala. In our limited way, we have all the richness and all the colorful and intelligent aspects of existence. Without discussing the negative aspects of the mandala, there is no way of understanding its positive aspects. The point now is to understand the complete psychological portrait of confused mind.

Student: Could you explain pride a bit more. I didn't understand it very well.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's a question of trying to extend your territory by disregarding the object you are relating with. In other words, you demonstrate your richness and create a claustrophobic situation for others.

S: What is the honey symbolic of?

TR: The potential for that kind of richness has a sweet and all-pervasive quality, and that sweetness is overwhelming, gooey. Honey is sweet and seductive, but we can only relate with it to a very limited extent. We don't expect to *bathe* in honey. We just expect to taste a spoonful, which is already a lot. But when we find waves and waves of it descending upon us, it becomes extremely suffocating.

S: So pride is extremely suffocating?

TR: Yes.

S: Do others relate with it?

TR: We are already one of those others, and we are dying in it. The proud person himself or herself is expressing his or her death. But we are talking about it from the point of view of the other person at this point. That is the only way we can talk about it. That goes for all five principles. We have to talk about them from the point of view of the other person, the one who is watching, the victim of those things, rather than from the point of view of being in it. It is worthless talking about that. There's no point in talking about how you feel about it from the inside. How you feel is like being sick in a hospital, having a terrible pain. The best way of explaining the pain is from the point of view of a witness of your pain rather than looking into how you would express it yourself. That goes for death as well.

Student: Rinpoche, what is the relationship between the center, deaf and dumb, and the four quarters?

Trungpa Rinpoche: All four quarters function and conduct their process by being deaf and dumb, by relating to their particular situation without being sensitive.

S: Is the assignment of particular directions to the various qualities arbitrary, or is there some meaning to that?

TR: There is a relationship between east and west, north and south. There are polarities of anger and passion, pride and jealousy. There are

polarities and pulls of all kinds that happen according to that pattern. It is not just random.

Student: I don't understand why the portrait is so negative. Why are we taking this negative approach?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you understand the deaf-and-dumb aspect, that is the key to the whole thing. When we discuss the various negative qualities, we do not particularly talk about how to overcome them, but about how to realize the heavy-handedness of each one. That brings some clue of how to relate with it. The alchemistic approach of base metal changing into gold comes later.

S: Does one find oneself more in one of the areas of the mandala than in the others?

TR: You have your own feeling of the mandala, which is related to one part, but it is still partly related to all the others. There is still the deaf-and-dumb quality always there. You are not willing to let yourself see what is happening as your game. That factor is always there. We could say that we have a certain potential. Because we are one of the four, we have certain characteristics. We are not transparent people, so we each have our own heavy-handedness, which is exactly what makes the path necessary. The path is for the use of heavy-handed people. Because of their particular heavy-handedness, they are on the path. So we should not regard that as something bad that we have to reject or destroy.

Student: In our discussion group we were saying that no matter how heavy-handed we are, we do somehow perceive the game quality of our trip as we are doing it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Except that we decide to play deaf and dumb. Understanding is how we play the game in this case.

S: What's the alternative to playing deaf and dumb?

TR: Not playing it.

S: What do you do?

TR: You don't do anything.

S: You mean being spontaneous.

TR: Well, spontaneity has all kinds of derogatory connotations connected with being loose.

S: I was thinking of the positive aspect of being spontaneous.

TR: But even then, it can become quite trippy. When you talk about spontaneity, it seems to mean just doing what's there, letting loose, which is a rather primitive and simple-minded idea of freedom. It's not just a question of being spontaneous. You are spontaneous because there is a certain intelligence functioning with the spontaneity. We'll come to that when we talk about the anti-ignorance aspect of the five principles. The idea of spontaneity involves being generous at the same time. But you could be overwhelmed by your generosity and get sucked into it. Then you might become frivolous rather than spontaneous. It's extremely sensitive.

Student: In that case, where does discipline fit in?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Precisely there. You have to discipline your spontaneity with intelligence. That way spontaneity has an element of orderly chaos in it. In talking about orderly chaos, we could say that *orderly* is disciplined, awake, and *chaos* is acceptance of the energy that happens within that realm.

Student: You seem to be describing the situation of one person in relation to the space around him or her. I was wondering at what point in our discussion of mandala we are going to talk about reciprocity, interaction. I'm talking about, instead of waiting for later when things will be transmuted, seeing that they are already transmuted.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's a question of how much you are willing to give in as opposed to wanting to learn something out of this. When you want to learn something out of it, that is very fishy. You have an ulterior motive of wanting to do something with your learning that automatically puts the whole thing off balance. If you are willing to just give in without learning, if you are willing to become rather than learn, that clears the air entirely. At that point, the whole thing becomes a total expression of freedom rather than a student situation. You see, when you want to learn something out of it, you are relating to knowledge as something other than you. When you are willing to *be* with the situation—when you don't give a shit whether you learn or not but you want to be in what is. . . . That is very difficult, but it is very simple at the same time.

S: It seems to me that you have to start by learning, because you are not able to just be right away. If you start by learning, there's some

chance to develop an intuitive feeling of things. Then you might be able to just be at that point.

TR: The question is whether you regard learning as something extraordinarily precious or as just something matter-of-fact. You could have the matter-of-fact attitude at the beginning as well. Then you would not have the attitude of being starved, therefore dealing with knowledge as a foreign element coming to you, feeling that knowledge is coming to you and you have to take the whole thing preciously. Instead, as much as possible, you can relate to the whole thing experientially. That way learning becomes matter-of-fact rather than extraordinary.

Student: Where does faith come in?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I suppose in this case faith is the whole approach. If you have faith in yourself as a working basis in a very basic way, you feel that you can handle this whole process. If you don't have faith in yourself, then your relationship to the path becomes living in a myth.

Student: I still don't understand why we have to talk about the five principles from the point of view of a witness. Why can't we talk about it in terms of ourselves?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You are relating with your projections anyway. In any case, you need a formula in your head in terms of language, which automatically means this as opposed to that. So seeing it from the point of view of the other amounts to the same thing.

FOUR

The Watcher's Game

THERE SEEMS TO BE more to the five types of samsaric patterns than five heavy-handed styles of existence that are unrelated to each other. The question arises as to how and why these five types of eccentricity occur. This is very important to know, not from the point of view of how to solve the problem, but rather from the point of view of understanding why and how things function together as part of the mandala situation. We are not looking at this whole situation with the idea of getting rid of the problem, because it is an inescapable situation. We cannot get rid of it. It seems to be deep-rooted and completely ingrained in our individual styles. So at this point, I would like to present the active force that relates with basic being and with the five samsaric principles.

The basic being we are discussing here has an element of clarity to it. This is clarity in the sense of not expecting anything at all, just waiting to relate with the next situation. But along with that clarity, there is also a sense of security that would like to capture something, make a record out of the whole situation, make it into a workable situation from the point of view of maintaining ego's existence. That workable situation that we deliberately manufacture out of nothingness, out of the open-minded situation, is known as watcher.

We are not satisfied with ourselves and therefore we try our best to satisfy ourselves, which is the activity of the watcher. It is a self-defined, dead-end way of surviving. In order to maintain ourselves, we keep track of the limitations of that maintenance, and because we know the limita-

tions of that maintenance, we try to maintain something more. It is a constant, ongoing situation almost like that of fighting death. We might know that death is coming very soon, that it is very close, but still we do not accept death; somehow we try to make a living out of death itself. In fact we could say that the whole samsaric structure, samsara and its seductions, is based on making something eternal out of something impermanent and transitory. Things are transitory—they cease to exist because they have been born. But by a twist of logic, we come to the conclusion that this transitoriness is happening all the time, and we try to make the transitoriness into eternity. In the Buddhist tradition, we do not talk about the soul as a continuing entity. The reason we do not is that it would be the ultimate hypocrisy—believing in nonexistence as something that exists, believing in transitoriness as something that is continuous. And that is watcher. The watcher validates its existence out of falsity; it tries to manufacture falsity as truth.

Believing in eternity seems to be the core of the matter for watcher and for the five aspects of the samsaric mandala altogether. We see the texture of vajra aggression or the texture of ratna richness. In order to maintain that texture and prove that there is something happening, we have to develop a certain way of seeing that texture. It consists of gaps, unconditioned gaps, and conditioned points. It is like an enlarged photograph in which you can begin to see the grain of the film. Both the grains and the space in between the grains are constituents of the photograph. What we try to do is convert the unconditioned space into conditioned dots or points. And we each have our own style of doing that, of looking at things that way. There is the aggression of the vajra family, the pride of the ratna family, the passion of the padma family, the jealousy of the karma family, and the stupidity of the Buddha family. In whatever style, we try to hang on to *something* out of nothing.

When we talk about "nothing," it is not a matter of wishful thinking—that the confusion really does not exist. Confusion does exist because it does not exist. This needs very, very careful thinking. Things are as they are because we want them to be that way, and the reason why they are that way is because we feel possibilities of their not being that way. In other words, when we see from the point of view of ego this unconditioned space that we have been talking about, it brings the fear of losing our ground. It is primordial ground that has nothing in it

whatsoever that could make it conditioned. And because of that, we find some way of distorting the truth into something that we can hang on to.

This is extremely subtle and basic. In fact, this is the whole way that we distort nirvana into samsara (rather than that samsara and nirvana stand opposed to each other as polarities). In this way, our whole approach becomes very neurotic, almost to the point of schizophrenia. The whole problem arises from looking for a handle, for crutches, for a point of reference to prove that we do exist. By doing that, we come up with our own styles: vajra-like, ratna-like, and so on. All these things that we put out are the handle that we want to hang something on. We would like to be saved. We would like to prove our existence by presenting one of those five basic principles.

So this experience of the [conditioned/unconditioned] texture is the experience of watcher, and that is the vital life force of the samsaric mandala. This experience works like this: you have projections and a projector set up, and both projections and projector work together to try to point out their own existence as a valid thing. So each situation confirms its own existence. Projections exist, because the projector has its definite ideas, and the projections prove that the projector is valid, and so forth. In this way, the whole game of the samsaric mandala is the most gigantic syndicate of hypocrisy that ever could be thought of. It has thought itself out, developed its own scheme spontaneously. It is just ape instinct, but it is on an extraordinarily large scale, so large that we can run the whole world on the basis of it—not just this globe, but the entire universe. This scheme is outrageous. It is so outrageous that it is inspiring. It is inspiring that a limited mind could extend itself into limitlessness; it is absurd, but it still does exist. And of course this limited mind is able to give birth to the nirvanic notion of mandala as well. Because of this watcher, because of this hypocrisy and deception, other alternatives begin to create themselves, which we are going to discuss later. The point now is to expose the hypocrisy, expose the game, so that at least the game becomes clear and obvious, a workable situation.

Student: What's the difference between the watcher and the disciplined spontaneity you spoke of in connection with the previous talk?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In the case of watcher, there is always a sense of referring to the end result. You evaluate each step, each move. In spontaneous discipline, you do not care about the end result; it exists because of its own basic situation.

Student: You talked about very careful thinking going into creating the confusion. Could you say more about what that careful thinking is?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes, it is true that confusion is made up of well-thought-out patterns. Confusion is well thought out in order to hypnotize itself. You don't get confused just because your plan is chaotic. You mean to bring about chaos. It is a political move. The purpose is for confusion to perpetuate its own mentality, its own identity. You put out certain ideas in a deliberate attempt to shield yourself from the embarrassment of your own hypocrisy, which has become very comfortable. You develop a pattern of doing continual double takes with regard to the productions of that hypocrisy. You say, "Oh, that's not a good one," or "That is a good one; let's get into it further." Then the hypocrisy or confusion becomes very solid and definite, and because of that definiteness, you begin to find it very homey. Whenever there is a doubt, you can always go back to that original game. By reflecting back to the original game, you get complete security out of it, you get completely hypnotized by it. Then you can "spontaneously" go on perpetually that way.

S: Why do we create this hypocrisy? So that we can give birth to the mandala?

TR: It's like a mother who doesn't want to go through the pain of giving birth. Each time there is a labor pain, she decides to try not to give birth, to keep the baby inside her womb. She would rather maintain that state constantly, because it is more self-snug, more comfortable. We do it purely for the sake of pleasure, because we don't want to give anything out. It is holding back in that sense. Consequently, we keep continuing on with this baby of ours. It makes us feel secure; it means a lot to us. It makes us feel important, because we are holding another person's life. At the same time, we feel threatened, because another labor pain might come along at any time. Because of that panic, again and again we try to maintain ourselves. We do our best not to give birth to enlightened mind, which is very terrifying and painful. We would have to pass something from us, really give something, and we don't really want to surrender to that degree. We don't really want to have to accept giving something. We don't want to let the product of our work become something outside of us; we don't want to cut the umbilical cord. We would rather preserve it.

S: I don't really see that this is comfortable. It seems uncomfortable.

TR: Well, that depends on how you look at it.

Student: Rinpoche, in the first lecture, you discussed establishing a boundary to a space that we solidify by calling it mine. Is that boundary the rim of the mandala?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Any kind of doubt could be said to be the rim. But the question is whether you want to have the rim, or boundary, as space or freeze it into something solid. In the analogy of hesitating to give birth, in the moment of that hesitation, you are freezing the boundary into something solid so that you get perpetual protection from giving birth.

S: So the boundary of the samsaric mandala is where it fails or falls apart.

TR: Yes.

S: It's its limits.

TR: It is the point of hypocrisy.

Student: How do you deal with the pain of giving birth?

Trungpa Rinpoche: You see, at this point we are not discussing how to deal with the pain, but we are trying to emphasize that the pain does exist. We cannot deal with the pain at all unless we know the nature of the pain and are familiar with its horrific aspect, the imprisonment aspect of the pain. How to deal with it seems to be unnecessary or unimportant. In fact, the problem all along in the past has been that too many ideas have been presented on how you can save yourself rather than on why you should save yourself or what the problem actually is. So at this point, we are discussing the heavy-handedness of the whole thing, rather than how we can be saved, which comes spontaneously. Once you know the nature of the heavy-handedness, the rest is obvious. We have no trouble getting out of it at all. That happens spontaneously.

S: The pain is not wanting to let go?

TR: Yes. You don't want to give birth or go as far as cutting the umbilical cord. The fear is that in giving birth and cutting the umbilical cord, you will become an insignificant person. From the point of cutting the umbilical cord, your child will grow up and become independent of you, another entity. Later on, you will become an insignificant person. We don't want to go through that; in fact, we become resentful about it.

S: It seems to be exactly the same as not wanting to die.

TR: That's right, precisely. Creating another entity means that you become an insignificant person. One day people will refer to your son or

daughter as somebody else having nothing to do with you. At the most, they might be kind enough to say his father or mother is so-and-so, rather than speaking about your son. So there is that fear that you will become something insignificant in the background.

Student: Is there anything that can be said about the incredible power of samsara? There are all those things that make it difficult to give birth, which make it difficult to see the hypocrisy, accept the hypocrisy, maybe work with the hypocrisy. Why is it so horrible, so incredibly . . .

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you are beginning to speak sense. You are quite right. Why? Why on earth? That's like a mantra. It's like Ramana Maharshi's teaching of "Who am I?" If you regard that as a question, then you miss the point. "Who am I?" in your practice of meditation should be regarded as a statement. If we regard "Who am I" as a statement, then we begin to open something. Why, why, why. Then you are not starved, but have already become rich.

There are two kinds of approaches. "Why" as a question is an expression of starvation. "Why" as a statement expresses the mentality of richness. In other words, if you regard it as an embryonic question concerning how the whole thing begins, it provides a lot of space rather than hunger. Space is not hungry; space is self-contained. It is rich already, because it has its own space. It has the space to afford to be space, spaciousness.

That is a very good point, which we can expand on as we continue.

FIVE

The Lubrication of Samsara

I FEEL THAT WE HAVE not yet discussed the samsaric aspect of mandala enough to get the general feel of it. In spite of not having much time left, we might still have to go into it further. It is worthwhile spending more time on confusion. Talking about confusion is much more helpful than talking about how to save ourselves. Once we know what to be saved from and what not to be saved from, then the rest becomes obvious. The general pattern of American karma as well as of the American approach to spirituality is another element that causes us to emphasize our confusion rather than purely making promises. Making promises tends to encourage spiritual materialism, which is an involvement with wanting to be saved rather than an understanding of what there is to be saved from. The tendency toward spiritual materialism is by far the most powerful one at hand, and we do not want to encourage an already aggravated situation such as that.

In terms of the samsaric mandala, there is something further that we have not yet discussed that lubricates the confusion and makes it functional and flowing. The basic nature of the samsaric mandala is composed of anger, pride, passion, jealousy, and ignorance. But looking at the totality of samsara in those terms alone is very crude. There's something far more subtle than that.

We have already discussed experiencing the texture of situations and the deceptive way of looking at things that is connected with that. There are also mixed feelings involved with this—a sense of sanity and insanity at the same time. But what we want to discuss now is more fundamen-

tal. It goes back to the basic area we discussed right at the beginning of the seminar when we talked about solid space and spacious boundary and spacious space and solid boundary. Somehow that is what provides the fundamental situation.

What is it that causes the samsaric communication of aggression to passion, passion to ignorance, ignorance to pride, and so forth? What is it that causes that to keep communicating itself to itself? What causes the survival of those five principles that we have discussed, including the experiencing of the texture? Why do they keep surviving? If they are solid blocks of neurosis, why don't they self-destruct? A state of anger and aggression feeds itself and destroys itself. Ignorance feeds itself by ignoring everything, but in the end there's no outlet, no way of relating to anything in the world outside, so it should diminish by itself. So what is it that keeps these emotions functioning as they seem to in the real world of samsara that we live in?

The pattern that develops that keeps up and maintains the whole environment of samsaric confusion has something to do with totality. There is something total happening. There is a totality of frivolousness, a totality of looking for entertainment, and a totality comprised of seeking survival through all-pervasive aggression. Those three principles seem to function simultaneously on the level of the totality to keep the individual qualities of confused mind alive. The individual characteristics of confused mind can be kept alive because there is a sympathetic environment functioning, which could be composed of two, three, four, or five of the confused states of mind that exist. So what we are pointing to here is the sympathetic environment that we tend to create rather than just to the five heavy-handed emotions as such. That sympathetic environment could be based on frivolousness, to take as an example one situation that is very prevalent right now.

Frivolousness is an area in which there is a sense of all-pervasiveness, but there are little particles jumping back and forth within that all-pervasive space. The space is uncertainty, and the particles are inquisitive mind. Those two form the totality of frivolousness, the totality of the frivolous sympathetic environment.

Frivolousness in this case is quite different from the ordinary popular idea of being silly or childish. There can be sophisticated frivolousness, frivolousness that is based on a cynical attitude toward traditions that have developed, toward the patterns that have formed in our society.

With this attitude, we feel up-to-date. We feel we are justified in criticizing or being cynical toward the existing pattern.

We have telephone poles with wires strung between them; we have the pattern of breakfast, lunch, and dinner that we have to conform with; people keep their front lawns neat with lawn mowers—these are broad basic patterns. Society functions in a certain way based on inspirations of the past. Certain patterns have been passed down by people from generation to generation that make it possible to keep society alive, to keep it neat and tidy and clean and functional. These things have nothing at all to do with philosophy or ecology. They take place on a simple, straightforward level—there's a rock, there's a tree, there's grass growing, there's a sky, there's a sunset.

We could criticize the sunset, saying, "This looks like a postcard picture." That is a perfect example of frivolous cynicism. We criticize people saying that so-and-so acts just like a typical grandfather or father or brother or mother-in-law. We tend to make certain assumptions and develop our cynical approach on the basis of them. It is as though the whole environment is totally poisoned. Whatever landmarks exist—telephone poles with wires running between them, neatly cut lawns, and so on—we use as targets.

What we seem to be discussing here is the frivolousness of the "avant-garde," which everybody thinks they are somehow associated with. We think that we are progressive and transformed people. We have a different perspective on society, which *they* have fucked up for us. We are resentful about that, and that makes us the avant-garde. We are the messengers of a new age, the Aquarian age, or whatever you call it. It is antitradition, anti-establishment, obviously. In fact, we could say it is anti-earth, because the earth has had to be cultivated, and cities have had to be built on it, so now we are resentful about the earth.

I'm not particularly condemning being resentful of pollution. There is nothing cynical about that. That problem arises to begin with because we regard the whole world just as a gigantic world of opportunity for us in which we can build up our own kind of cynicism and unfriendliness. We can make the whole world into a gigantic satire. But by taking that satirical approach, we are pulling the rug out from under our own feet. The detrimental result of such an approach is that people end up by killing themselves, or for that matter, laughing their heads off. Those two extremes do arise.

The whole cynical approach is an extraordinarily aggressive one. The joke that develops out of it is a pointed joke, an aggressive joke. It is making fun of somebody's thousand years of accomplishment, which is tradition. Tradition, whether developed in the East or the West, is not particularly a laughing matter, because people meant it. We could say that it is too heavy, not light enough, but so what? We do not have to reduce that ground to frivolousness, reduce it to our satirical or hysterical approach.

What I'm trying to say is that we have a very glib and easy way of pointing out the negative situations and the situations that are prone to cynicism, the humorous situations of spiritual and psychological materialism. We criticize how people run their businesses and how they drive themselves mad, and how they run their so-called enlightened society. In doing that, we do not leave any room—any freedom—to be inspired, which is something that does happen constantly at the same time as being critical. The fact that we do not leave that room does not mean that there isn't any. There is tremendous room for psychological materialism and its businesslike, economic approach, and there is tremendous room at the same time for tradition that has nothing at all to do with psychological or spiritual materialism. And there is also room to appreciate the existing patterns that have already been created, which—of course—are a mishmash of spiritual materialism and genuine spirituality, both at the same time.

The point is that it is easy to criticize the materialistic approach, both psychological and spiritual, and to destroy it logically. But the real problem that we have to face is putting ourselves in the same boat as those we are criticizing, as if *we* had to take responsibility for running the whole world economically, spiritually, psychologically, and politically. How would we do it? That seems to be the real problem.

The frivolousness that goes on in ego's mentality has intelligence in it as well, which communicates back and forth between aggression and passion and so on. But at the same time, it has an extraordinarily resentful quality. It blames. It says, "It's somebody else's fault, therefore I have nothing to do with it. *My* duty, my life's occupation, is to make fun of other people constantly, to regard them as a big joke, to regard the whole world as a big joke."

This is quite a different big joke from the one that developed in the tantric tradition. Maya, or illusion, the dance of the dakinis, is also a big

joke.[1] But it is not a cynical joke. It is a serious joke, if I may say so. The difference between a cynical joke and a serious joke is a very interesting one. The cynical joke is much more heavy-handed than the enlightened ones. The enlightened jokes are much lighter, because they leave room to accept wisdom, to accept the past.

Take Naropa, for example. He spent twelve years going through all kinds of painful tortures imposed by his guru Tilopa, and he attained the level of a lineage holder of the Kagyü tradition. And that is the path that we now have here. That is what we have to hold on to. It was not a joke; it was not a game. It was a matter of consequence. On the other hand, the kind of approach that regards everything as unreal because that provides a way to escape from it is the lubrication that has developed in the samsaric mandala. That disregarding of the effort and energy put in by people in the past goes on all the time.

Of course we might object, saying, "I don't want to be dogmatic," "I don't want to be a convert," "I don't want to be a heavy person," or "I don't want to trip out about anything at all." But all that "I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to" is itself an extremely heavy trip. We are trying to put ourselves in an extremely safe situation in which there is no room for committing ourselves to a tradition, no room for relating to any solid ground at all. We might say that the ascetic trip of Milarepa was too pure, or Naropa's approach of having visions and trying to follow them was very psychedelic and trippy. And, we might say, Tilopa was the greatest tripper of them all. There is no end to our cynicism. We do not allow any kind of space or room to move about with the dignity of basic tradition. We alienate ourselves from the inheritance that we have received and from the work that other people have put into society to produce this particular kind of solid situation. This is one of the plagues that could develop from taking a cynical attitude toward spirituality, even spiritual materialism. A very powerful, widespread disease of this type could develop.

That approach of trying to establish your ground somewhere but nowhere, which lubricates the situations of ego and its constituents of passion, pride, aggression, and so forth, goes on all the time. It is an approach of carelessness, of feeling that everything is going to be okay because we are allied with a super-satire person, a supercynic. "If there are any kind of trips going on with something wrong in them, my satirical authority figure is going to see it and transmit the message to me."

As a result of this kind of attitude, we end up having nothing—just an extremely frivolous situation.

The whole point is that what lubricates the samsaric mandala is a frivolous approach to samsara—not taking samsara's game seriously enough. We fail to regard samsara as something very powerful, very energetic. We tend to dismiss it as belonging to an area of mistake, not realizing that the mistake has been made seriously and meaningfully. Such mistakes bring about the sacrifice of many lives and a great deal of time. They are monuments. So samsara is a very monumental situation rather than something frivolous. Somebody decides to do it; it is not an accident. It is not something frivolous, it is a very serious game. We have to learn to respect the monumental creation called samsara. It is because of its monumental quality that it also breeds nirvana at the same time, as a by-the-way situation. So we cannot purely take a satirical approach toward samsara. We have to take it very seriously and the whole world very seriously. This seems to be a very important point.

Student: Is this kind of lubrication found only in the West?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it is found everywhere. It happens in the East as well, or anywhere where a highly traditional society decides to do something insane and is criticized and laughed at. It is found all over the globe and even among Martians!

S: How do you deal with it if it's so monumental? How do you get through it if you want to respect it and everything that went into it but still don't want to go along with it?

TR: It is such a monumental situation that you respect it for that. It is extraordinary, impressive; it is extraordinarily documentary. You respect it as a landmark. If you do that, what we talked about right at the beginning of the seminar can happen: you can begin to realize that space happens within those monumental things and becomes more significant than the monuments themselves. The monuments—the Statues of Liberty—are hollow monuments. But until you realize the monumental quality of the Statue of Liberty, you don't see all that it is. You have to respect things; in other words, the whole thing is regarded as sacred.

Student: I'm cynical.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Okay.

S: But I also have a tendency to be too serious. I can't seem to really

understand what it is to have a sense of humor. So part of my being cynical is wanting to have a sense of humor. It comes out in cynicism.

TR: How would you develop your sense of humor?

S: Maybe you can't develop it?

TR: How do you develop your seriousness?

S: By being too attached, too worried about myself.

TR: How about the space between the two [between humor and seriousness]? What happens there, can you tell me?

S: [*Student is unable to answer.*]

TR: I think that is the interesting area. It is not so important what happens in terms of that and this, but what happens in between the two.

Student: The tradition here seems to be a tradition of forced change, constant innovation. If we go along with that, we find ourselves with changes that are very unpleasant for the entire globe. Many of us are here at this seminar perhaps because of a recognition that we have to return to the sources of a genuine tradition that is monumental . . .

Trungpa Rinpoche: We are talking about monumental in the sense of solid space or hollow space. We are not talking about *the* monument or *the* landmark that is connected with the dharmakaya or dharmadhatu realm.[2] That is very different—

S: It's very different from the mentality that has created the H-bomb and is destroying the globe ecologically. For me it's not a matter of resenting tradition as much as of having to reject it out of the same source from which I recognize humanity in myself and my relation to the whole biosphere, all living things. I must reject a cultural tradition that tends to destroy that relatedness.

TR: Well, that's some kind of respect, isn't it?

S: Well, I don't feel cynical, but I do have to reject what I see in the cultural tradition.

TR: In other words, you have to reject not being a poet. Do you write poetry?

S: Yes.

Trungpa Rinpoche: You do? How? What line do you take in relating to the world in the realm of poetry? How do you write poetry so that it doesn't become solid?

S: On the basis of what you've said about mandalas, I would say that my conception of a poem is a mandala. It's a recognition of a bounded

area, and one of the limitations of that is that it's words. Is that what you mean?

TR: Not exactly. The idea is that poetry could become hollow poetry, like a concretized sponge. It has the stoneness or rocklike quality of concrete, but at the same time it's filled with all kinds of space. Consequently, if you threw it in the water, it would float, rather than sinking to the bottom of the pond.

S: It seems to me that avant-garde cynicism gets to be a tradition in itself.

TR: That's true. For instance, the early poems of Allen Ginsberg and a lot of poets and playwrights of the American Beat Generation are very satirical about society. And in particular, a lot of inspiration sprung up after the Vietnam War, which provided something to work with in terms of basic material. There is nothing particularly wrong with the satirical remarks or satirical poems themselves at all. They're beautiful. They see all kinds of areas, all kinds of corners. They speak beautifully. But what is the matter with that poetry is the punctuation, which speaks of mutual embarrassment. Nobody talks about freeing ourselves from the hysterical entrapment we have been discussing here. So something is unsaid, remains unsaid all the time, whenever we criticize. That unspeakable truth becomes haunting—like the ghost of George Washington! It's all over.

S: How does what you're saying relate to exposing the hypocrisy of the samsaric mandala?

TR: We have to acknowledge that to begin with. We are not advanced enough to expose it as a matter of public humiliation. At this point we're merely concerned with acknowledging that such a thing is happening and with digging it out from the subconscious or unconscious embarrassment that keeps us wanting to keep silent about that whole area.

S: Does the mandala have a historic aspect? Is there a forward and backward?

TR: Mandala is time in its own way, so obviously future and past become the mandala.

S: Can we see it going forward?

TR: As well as coming backward.

S: Where would the viewer be standing in relation to that?

TR: Nowhere.

Student: I don't understand what you mean by lubricating the samsaric mandala. You said frivolousness lubricates it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I mean lubrication in a pejorative sense.

S: It makes it more slippery?

TR: It provides a slippery situation so you can sneak in and out without being caught.

S: In other words, so we don't have to deal with—

TR: So you don't have to deal with reality.

S: When you were talking about respecting the monument, did you mean in the sense of respecting the power of an enemy? Since so many lives have fallen to this monumental tradition, it's not something just to laugh off and dismiss frivolously, but should be respected as something that has taken many human lives?

TR: Respecting it as an enemy or not as an enemy amounts to the same thing. It is both the irritatingly common enemy and a source of wisdom at the same time—because it is a landmark of that as opposed to this.

S: Let us take the example of well-manicured lawns. I can see how the satirical response to that definitely leaves something unsaid. But on the other hand, if you're respecting that situation, doesn't that leave the scorn unsaid? Isn't that appropriate also—your scorn or distaste for that?

TR: I wouldn't say that all of it is appropriate. There is unsaid space all over the situation which could be called stagnation from ego's point of view. In terms of ego's mandala, it is stagnation. There is stagnation as well as space within the stagnation, which is worth looking at. What I have been saying is that there is no solution, really, and there is no absence of a solution, really, either. The point is to find that area where both a solution and the solutionless situation can function simultaneously. Find that space. Space doesn't provide either birth or death. There is something total, something happening as a totality. So the problems and the possibilities of the samsaric mandala can function simultaneously.

Student: I would like to find some space in guilt. What is the position of guilt in the mandala?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That you feel terribly guilty that you have created the mandala. At the same time, you have created that guilt, which is itself space. That is to say, you never necessarily had to create the man-

dala; you needn't have started the mandala at all. So guilt goes both ways. There is guilt related to having made mistakes and there is guilt as the working basis. From that point of view, nobody is punished and nobody is confirmed. I'm afraid the answer does not come out very straightforward. The answer is only food for your further understanding.

Student: What part does fear play in all this?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Fear is the antilubricational aspect of the samsaric mandala as well as a lubricator at the same time. Fear is about how things might happen and also about how they might *not* not work. It goes both ways at the same time. It's like the symbolism of the vajra. It has a ball in the middle, which joins the two ends. The ball in the middle represents space, and things going on at the two ends are the energy of fear. This end might work or possibly that end might work. But both ends are related to the central area in which we have to give up that particular trip altogether.

S: What about somebody who completely believes in tradition and lives their whole life according to it? Still they have passion, aggression, ignorance, and fear going on, because they're dead serious.

TR: That is automatically antitraditional. That's not realizing what tradition actually means.

Student: Rinpoche, could you say something about the other two of the three lubricants you mentioned: entertainment and aggression?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think there is no point in going into great detail on those. The whole point is that they create some kind of excuse, and the way of doing that is to create a link within the space—some kind of circulation. It is like the veins and arteries that keep up the circulation while the basic body is functioning. One can imagine how it works: all kinds of little discursive thoughts, little games going on constantly, either trying to grasp what is happening or trying to escape from it, or else trying to relax between the two. The point is that that kind of mind is going on all the time, and it is lubrication rather than a basic principle like, for example, the five basic principles that we discussed. It is intermediary in relation to all those situations. This is the case with frivolousness and a cynical attitude toward the world, toward life, toward poetry, art, and so on.

SIX

Totality

THE SAMSARIC MANDALA provides energy beyond the samsaric level. When we say "beyond," the idea is not of getting out of samsara, or even, for that matter, of transcending it in the ordinary sense. We are talking about getting to the source of the samsaric mandala, to the background of it. We are talking about a way in more than about a way out. This is because the nature of the samsaric mandala contains within it nonduality, absence of confusion, and freedom. In other words, being able to see the source, or background, of the samsaric mandala is the mandala of freedom.

In the beginning of the seminar, we talked about solid space and a spacious fringe. From our present point of view, neither the space nor the solidity are a part of the buddha mandala; rather it is the total situation in which those two polarities can exist and maintain themselves. The buddha mandala is a kind of environment or air in which the two polarities can maintain themselves. So we are not so much discussing liberation from samsaric confusion, but we are looking at the ground in which both liberation and confusion can maintain themselves and also dissolve.

Liberation and confusion are seen in terms of a mandala pattern, but in that mandala pattern, realization and confusion are still interdependent, still conditioned. Therefore, even freedom or spaciousness or goodness is also part of the samsaric mandala along with wickedness (or whatever you want to call it). So we are not discussing a war between samsara and nirvana and considering how one of them could defeat or

overcome the other. We are discussing the environment in which the energy of those two can exist and maintain itself. We are talking about the energy that gives birth and brings death at the same time, that totality on its own absolute level, without watcher, without observer. This is the idea of *dharmata,* which means "that which is," "being in itself," or "constantly being."

These ideas may seem quite abstract if we just look at them from this angle, but we can also look at them on the practical level of our day-to-day lives. For instance, we can see our aggression and passion or conventional goodness, piety, and love. We can see how all those things function in a kind of basic totality. We have the possibility of anger, of passion, and of ignorance—these emotions have to function somewhere. They draw energy out and redistribute it and draw it out again. A complete cycle, or circulation, takes place. That which provides the possibility for such a circulation to take place is the basic totality that we are talking about—dharmata.

This could hardly be said to be connected only with nirvana—that would be a one-sided view. In a totally awake situation, emotions arise and develop, but those emotions have unconditioned qualities in them. In that sense, the emotions have their polarities and dichotomies.

In actual practice, we might express our aggression, our anger, by hitting someone or destroying someone or by being verbally nasty. Such actions and frustrations coming out of our emotions are the result of failing to realize that there is a total space in which these energies are functioning. In other words, suppressing or acting out both produce substitute emotions rather than true emotions. Both are sedatives. Experiencing perfect, or true, emotions means realizing the background totality, realizing that the emotions are functioning or happening in the midst of a whole space. At that point, we begin to experience the flavors of the emotions, their textures, their temperatures. We begin to feel the living aspect of the emotions rather than the frustrated aspect.

What frustration means in this context is stagnation—we want to give birth but we cannot. Therefore, we scream, we try to push out, we try to burst out. We feel that though something is definitely happening, still something is not quite there. There is a sense of "unaccomplishment," a sense of something being totally wrong on the emotional level. This is because we fail to see the totality, the whole, which is the mandala principle. We could call this the buddha mandala. I prefer not to use

the term *mandala of nirvana,* because it has an element of dichotomy (the war between samsara and nirvana) in it.

This does not refer only to emotions but applies to our daily-life experience as a whole. Once we see the totality, we have the experience of seeing things as they are in their own fullest sense. The blueness of the sky and the greenness of the fields do not need confirmation, and they also do not need a sense of extraordinary appreciation. They are *so,* therefore we do not have to be reassured that they are so. When we realize the basic totality of the whole situation, then perceptions become extraordinarily vivid and precise. This is because they are not colored by the fundamental conventionality of believing in something. In other words, when there's no dogma—when there's no belief in the blueness of the sky and the greenness of the field—then we begin to see the totality. The reason why perceptions are much more spectacular and colorful then is that we do not transmit the message of duality between solidity and spaciousness. Such a message is transmitted when we fail to see the sharp edges of things precisely. If we experience solid space and hollow grass, at that very boundary where the space meets the grass, a faint message is interchanged. It is like the border guards of two countries exchanging cigarettes with each other. There is a fuzzy edge there. It is not black and white, not precise.

That same thing happens if we decide to give up samsara and try to associate ourselves with nirvana. The journey from samsara's area automatically brings a sense of the past. There is the sense of making a journey into some other realm. In this case the other realm is nirvana, or goodness, or whatever you would like to call it. The sense of achieving this journey in itself becomes an expression of samsara or hang-up, because you are still involved with directions [still biased in favor of one of the two polarities]. That's why there's no black-and-white world. As far as the dualistic world of samsara and nirvana is concerned, until one is able to relate to the total basic mandala, faint exchanges continue to take place. Nothing is seen precisely and clearly. Before you see black as black and white as white, there is a grayness, a very faint and subtle grayness of communication across the borderline between black and white.

This is of courses what we were talking about earlier when we were discussing frivolousness and when we were discussing the sense of security and discursive thoughts or metaphysical, philosophical concepts.

Here there are no definite metaphysical, philosophical concepts or definite emotions, but there is [still the sense of duality], something that is like the smell in a broken perfume bottle. It still contains some awareness that there was perfume in it, although there is nothing in it anymore.

From the point of view of the awakened state of mind, the basic mandala does not require transmission of any lineal messages in order to see things as they are.[1] That is why the tantric tradition speaks of transmutation. The characteristic of transmutation is that lead is changed *completely* into gold, absolutely pure gold without a trace of lead. The lead is totally and completely changed. It is a black-and-white situation.

The idea of a leap, or jump, has been mentioned in this connection in the traditional books. But what is involved here is not really a leap or jump. If we use those terms, the whole principle might be misinterpreted once again in the sense of a journey forward. There is a particular Tibetan term that is appropriate here: *la da wa* or *la da. La* means the top of the ridge in a mountain pass; *da wa* means "gone beyond it." You don't just go beyond the ridge, you go beyond ridgeness itself. In other words, you don't leap forward; rather, in making the necessary preparations for leaping, you realize that there is no need to leap forward, but you have already arrived by leaping backward. You find that the carpet has already been pulled out from under your feet, so at that point, the journey becomes unnecessary. The notion of leap itself becomes unnecessary. If you have a "leap," that is an idea or concept. That is walking on solid space.

At this point, we might find the basic totality of the mandala extremely terrifying. There is no ground, there is no journey, there is not even any effort. We cannot even deny it, because we discover it. And we cannot put it into terms or ideas. The self-destructive situation of ego simultaneously finds its self-creative situation.

In that sense, the totality of the mandala brings basic unification. This unification comes in the five parts that we have already discussed in terms of the samsaric mandala—the four types of samsaric setups plus the one in the middle. But before we get into the details of those in terms of the buddha mandala, I would like to make sure that everybody knows, as far as words and concepts can convey, that what we are discussing is not so much structures or qualities or diagrams or interrelatedness at all. What we are discussing at this point is complete totality that

does not depend on its expressions or manifestations or anything. It is *whole,* because the space and the boundary are always simultaneously there, everywhere. It does not need any journey or relationships. This acts as the sustainer of confusion, samsara, as well as of its counterpart nirvana with its inspiration. This process of the basic mandala is simultaneously death and birth. It is creative as well as destructive at the same time, in every single moment, fraction of a second, or whatever you would like to call it—beyond time and space. There is no time and space, because there is no polarity. If there is no polarity, then it happens at once. That is why there is no room for conceptualization. When you formulate concepts you give birth, and then that which you gave birth to undergoes old age and begins to die. But here, no such lineal journey is involved.

This situation is described in certain tantric texts as *sang thal,* which means in Tibetan "transparent," or "simultaneously penetrating." This does not mean transparent from somebody else's point of view, as though someone is standing behind a glass window; but it is from the point of view of the glass window itself. That is the way it is transparent. It doesn't need watcher anymore, because it is transparent by itself.

All these ideas of the basic mandala, the total mandala, that we have been discussing are on the whole from nobody's point of view. The mandala is its own point of view. Therefore, it is free from birth and death as well as being the epitome of birth and death at the same time. It is that which sustains the whole universe, the whole of existence, as well as that which kills everything. In the tantric tradition, it is often referred to as the charnel ground. In the iconography of the charnel ground, there is the sage of the charnel ground, the river of the charnel ground, the tree of the charnel ground, and the pagoda of the charnel ground. This iconography is the expression that birth and death takes place there simultaneously. There are skeletons dancing and wild animals tearing apart bodies. Somebody else chases the animals and they drop the bodies. There are loose legs, loose arms, and loose heads. While one wild animal is chewing one part of a body, another more powerful animal comes and eats its tail. By trying to run away from death, it simultaneously creates it. It is very gloomy and terrifying—nothing pleasant, particularly. If you look at it from somebody else's point of view, it becomes extraordinarily unpleasant. But from its own point of view it is self-existing, extremely rich and fertile.

Student: Is the center of the wheel of life the charnel ground?

Trungpa Rinpoche: No, I wouldn't say that. That would be more Yama himself, who carries the wheel of life and is birth and death simultaneously.[2] It is the whole totality rather than the source of energy. It is the situation in which energy can exist rather than a particular point within that or a particular relational action.

Student: Is it possible to have a vague experience of this totality? It seems as though there is some kind of feeling of this totality that exists all the time, but it is very vague because if you try to watch it or grab on to it, it dissolves away.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is so, because that sense of vagueness is a sense of insecurity. There is a sense that something is wrong, something is not quite right, because fundamentally there is no ground anymore. There's no solidness to dwell on. That is the mystical experience of the ultimate meaning of duhkha, pain, suffering, discomfort. We begin to find the meaninglessness of materialistic pleasure and so on, but there's something more than that: fundamentally, we can feel something and we can't make up our minds whether it is something for us or against us, but there is something going on. That sense that something is cooking could also be described as the experience of Buddha nature, in fact.[3] But we can't put our finger on it or create it.

S: Does the insecurity disappear as you experience it more often?

TR: If you try to make it into a basis for security, then it doesn't exist anymore.

TR: Is the idea to try to have an experience that is neutral with regard to samsara and nirvana?

TR: Basically, any form of experience contains a sense of reference point which is the basis for rejecting or accepting. You cannot have experience without painful or pleasurable situations. You cannot just have neutral experience at all. The extreme or biased experiences that you have are part of the chaos. These kinds of chaotic experiences have been systematically arranged in a workable fashion by religious practitioners for the sake of their books, their holy books. They have categorized certain things as good and certain things as bad, associating them with God or Satan. But on the whole we are not discussing which experiences are valid and which are not. Rather we are saying that the whole thing has no substance in it.

S: The comparison has no substance?

TR: Right, because it is dependent on the other point of view.

S: So the point of view is not important either. The vagueness is almost more important than the point of view.

TR: Yes, from the point of view of spaciousness or totality.

S: So it is better to remain vague than define things or take a point of view that needs to be expressed.

TR: I wouldn't say just purely remain vague. But if you remain vague on a very subtle level—not having a reference point—then that vagueness becomes very lively; it becomes luminous in fact. Instead of being vague and gray, it becomes dazzling. It also becomes somewhat definite, but not from the point of view of polarities. It becomes definite in its own innate nature, because there is no watcher involved.

Student: When you talked about the hollow grass and the solid space and the grayness in between, I didn't understand. Perhaps it has to do with this vagueness.

Trungpa Rinpoche: No, that is not this kind of vagueness exactly. That is a kind of deceptive vagueness in which you can't make up your mind. You have to maintain allegiance toward both ends. In other words, you depend on hope as well as on fear, and you want to keep a foot in both camps.

S: You hope that the grass is there and—

TR: And fear that it isn't. But still there is some way of twisting the fear around. It's a very cunning game.

S: So the grayness comes from our own oscillation.

TR: Yes, very much so. Or more likely from a deceptive sense of community, a deceptive attitude of cooperation, coexistence, rather than aloneness.

S: Is that kind of midway between having solid grass and empty space?

TR: Yes.

S: And the third alternative?

TR: A sense of allegiance to somewhere, something. But that is equally confused. The reason why it is gray is that watching yourself lubricates everything between the hollow space and solid grass—or the other way around, whatever. The commentator makes everything comfortable, so that you don't have to make a sudden entrance into any-

thing. It is like flying from one country that is cold to another one that is hot in an air-conditioned airplane. That makes the situation bearable so that you don't have to go through sudden changes. Everything is made as hospitable as possible.

S: Then the Buddha's state of mind must be very uncomfortable.

TR: Not at all, because there is no watcher. It is being itself.

S: But you said that it's watcher that makes things comfortable.

TR: As well as paranoid at the same time. Watcher intends to make things comfortable.

S: I see.

TR: But the Buddha's mind is not concerned with any of that, so a whole big area is taken away. Economically, it is very cheap.

Student: How can we see the charnel ground in our own experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is the sense of threat that most people experience. You feel that you are on the verge of a freak-out and are losing your ground in terms of keeping a grip on who are your enemies and who are your friends. You want to make sure that they are enemies and friends and don't want to confuse the two. You want to make the whole thing definite. That in itself becomes very painful and uninviting. As Buddhists, the whole thing that we are trying to do is to approach an area that nobody wants to get into. People try to run away from it all the time and in that way have created samsara. As long as we are on the path and practicing and developing, we are doing this impossible thing, approaching that thing that people have been rejecting for millions of years. We find it extremely discomfiting, and we are going toward it, exploring it. That is why it is so painful to give and open. That kind of unwanted place is like the charnel ground. It haunts us all over the place, not just one place.

S: It seems to be the state where there's the most possibility for transformation.

TR: Precisely, yes. Needless to say.

Student: Can you say something about the mandala just as a shape, a pattern, rather than as what it contains? I know this is very imprecise, but what makes it so extraordinary to see the whole thing as a mandala rather than as just statements of fact like any other religion or system does?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The point is that one sees the totality, the whole area. One begins to have an extraordinary panoramic vision with no boundaries. One can afford to associate with particular energies, particular directions then, because one's working situation is not based on a sense of direction anymore. You have a directionless direction. It is an entirely new approach to time and space. You can approach time because it is timeless; you can approach space because it is spaceless. There is a direction because there are no directions at the same time. This opens up tremendous possibilities of another way of looking at the whole thing. At the same time, of course, there's no reference point, therefore you can't keep track of it. Wanting to keep track of it would be comparable to wanting to attend one's own funeral.

S: Rinpoche, would it be possible to view the totality of the situation like a field upon which there's a football game. There's this and that—it's like a game between God and the devil, nirvana and samsara. And that panorama sort of has a pointless point of view from the ground position. It sort of shoots God and the devil out of the saddle at the same time.

TR: That's right, yes. That's a good one.

S: Is that prajna?

TR: No, that's jnana.[4] In prajna there's still a watcher. Prajna would be like a panoramic television camera viewing the scene from the point of view of space. Jnana is the point of view of the ground itself.

Student: Rinpoche, it seems to me that in the samsaric mandala, everything is so neatly divided and compartmentalized into five segments with lines or barriers between the segments. Do these barriers refer to anything in terms of the functioning of ego?

Trungpa Rinpoche: They are connected with the watcher—with the sense of intellect or the sense of watcher. We constantly refer back to our central headquarters to make sure everything is functionally lubricated. This is connected with an attitude of being dependent on survival. Our motto is: "We have to survive." In order to survive, we have to do these things, and there is a tremendous threat of death, yet we think that we are constantly creating life. Of course, from another point of view, we are creating death at the same time, so this approach defeats itself.

Student: Rinpoche, you talked about orderly chaos. The orderly aspect was connected with discipline, and the chaos was the energy that is

happening at a given point. Was that connected with the approach we are speaking of now, an approach to the total ground in which everything is happening? Is discipline being able to see birth and death simultaneously?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Being in a position to experience orderly chaos is itself the discipline. But then as far as the relationship to orderly chaos is concerned, it is something extraordinarily organic. There is a totality that takes care of the chaos, that puts things into a situation.

S: Do you take care of the discipline or is the discipline already there?

TR: The discipline is already there. On the whole, we could say that discipline is like a refrigerator. The chaos is all the chaotic things going on inside the refrigerator—there are so many things in the refrigerator. The orderliness is that the refrigerator breathes cold air on all of it.

SEVEN

The Mandala of Unconditioned Being

LET US CONTINUE OUR discussion of totality, the total space of dharmata. There are different aspects of that basic total space, different aspects of the totality of the basic mandala of unconditioned being. There is an element of accommodation and there is also an element of vastness. Here accommodation becomes energetic, because accommodation is allowing a space to develop or allowing things to develop within a certain space. When trees grow and grass grows, space also takes part in that growth, that energy, at the same time. Without the basic space there cannot be trees or grass or any kind of energy developing.

Accommodation is the aspect of efficiency. The other aspect of the space is a kind of acceptance, the quality of letting things expand to their fullest extent.

In talking about the five buddha principles, we are not saying that they are five definite, individual entities. They are aspects of the basic totality that accommodates things and allows them to happen. So it is not so much a matter of five separate buddha qualities; rather there are five aspects of the totality. We are talking about one situation from five different angles.

So there are these two basic qualities to the totality: the energy or efficiency or accommodation aspect of the space and the expansiveness aspect of it. Those two function on a nondual—not-two—level. This nonduality is a third quality of the totality.

The nondual aspect of the totality is the buddha family, which is constantly accommodating in its own fullest way, unmoved by any particular events. It is symbolized in the traditional iconography by a wheel eternally revolving. It has a sense of timelessness, constant being.

The energy or efficiency aspect is connected with the karma and vajra families. All these distinctions we are making and descriptions of aspects we are giving here are less concerned with what is contained than with the container. Efficiency from this point of view means providing accommodation for efficiency rather than being efficient in the active sense.

There are two ways of instigating efficiency. One is through the sharpness of vajra, which covers all the territory and all the areas, so that, as far as the space is concerned, there are no unsurveyed areas left. Because of that quality of surveying all areas, we could use the word *intellect* here in a relative sense, though it may not apply on the absolute level. We can speak of intellect here in virtue of its precision and sharpness.

The other style of efficiency is karma, which is not efficient so much in the sense of covering all areas as in the sense of believing in automatic fulfillment. There is the sense that things are already being fulfilled, so there is an ongoing energy of total functioning. You don't have to try to function or try to fulfill, because everything is being fulfilled. Because of that, you do not have to push into any particular area. That is karma—seeing the totality of action as it is, so there is no struggle involved.

The acceptance or expansive aspect of dharmata, or total basic space, is connected with padma and ratna.

Ratna sees everything in terms of oneness or sameness. In other words, the notion of expanding into a certain territory does not apply anymore, because the space is seen as self-existing. Everything is seen as constantly being, with a sense of total confidence or total pride. There is acknowledgement of everything being, with a sense of self-existing dignity. There is no room to move about or speculate or maneuver. Everything is completely total.

For padma, the total sense of existence also has a tremendous sense of being self-contained. The richness of dignity that has already been developed creates a sense that almost expects or commands magnetism. But again, the terms *command* or *expect* are insufficient or valid only in a relative sense. It is not expecting on the basis of a center-and-fringe

notion of this and that; or "command" in the sense of marching into somebody's territory and trying to suck them in. Rather it is like a magnet existing for its own sake rather than having to exercise its magnetic qualities on something else. It is a sort of self-contained magnet.

These five qualities are the basic constituents of the mandala. The reason it is a mandala is because all these qualities relate with each other. It is almost like saying the same thing five different ways. The basic quality of the whole thing is being without a struggle, without a journey. And being without a struggle or journey has different expressions, not because of any relational situation, but just simply as a way of existing. Therefore, we can afford to be free, without aggression, without a fight, without a struggle.

To get into all the meanings of the iconographical details of mandala pictures would require several years of time and space. So trying to put everything into a so-called nutshell, we could say that basic accommodating, or vast being, also contains tremendous power, invincible power, because it does not depend on the existence of the relative world. Since it does not depend on existing in the relative world, it does not need any feedback. Since it does not depend on any feedback, it is not threatened by anything at all. And such 200 percent power (you could almost say, if there is such a thing—we are using relative language again) could be seen as extremely wrathful. This is wrath without anger, without hatred. It is being in a state of invincibility. It is wrath in the sense of a living flame—it does not allow any dualistic or relative concepts to perch on it. If a dualistic situation presented itself, it would be burned up automatically, consumed. But this power contains tremendous peacefulness at the same time. This is not peacefulness in the sense of absence of wrath. That basic space is peaceful because there is no reason that it should not be peaceful, because its totality is always there. Therefore, it is luminous and pure and accommodates everything with nondualistic compassion.

The idea of conflict is generally based on our being trapped in a relative world. The starting point for chaos or confusion is maintaining some point, maintaining some situation. When we try to maintain some point, the occupation that is involved in the process of maintaining is dependent on the threat that comes from all other areas, and that threat channels into the possibility of not being able to maintain. If it were not for that threat, there would be no question of having to maintain at all. The question does not arise at the beginning.

The relationship between maintaining and protecting against the threat to maintaining is like the relationship between zero and one. One is dependent on zero and zero is dependent on one. This is not at all the same as the relationship between one and two. The Sanskrit word *advaya* and the Tibetan word *nyi-me* both express the notion of "not-two," which applies to the relationship between zero and one. In this case it means "no zero, no one." The idea is that as soon as we begin to see in terms of pattern or even begin to imagine or barely think in terms of even vague perceptions of a point of reference, that *is* the birth of both samsara and nirvana (to use the popular terms). The idea of not-two is that it is possible to have a world—a complete, pragmatic world—beyond any point of reference. It is more than possible; it is highly possible. In fact such a world is much more solid than the world of relativity, which is a weak situation based on interdependence, subject to constant death and birth and all kinds of other threats, which constantly arise. With threats constantly arising, the relative situation finally becomes extremely freaky—one never knows who is who, what is what, which is which. It is like the joke "Who's on first, what's on second?"

The dualistic misunderstanding occurs right at the beginning, so when you try to correct it, it just develops into further misunderstandings. But what we are saying is that there is an entirely new area, another dimension, that does not need proof or interpretation. It does not need a reference point. That there is such a dimension is not only highly possible, but it is *so*.

The inspiration of this dimension has developed into beautiful works of art, an imaginary world of nonexistence, a nondualistic world. As personal experience and tradition evolved, 725 basic mandalas were developed, each one of them extremely detailed and precise. One mandala might contain as many as 500 deities. All those patterns of deities are based on the five principles, the five aspects of the basic space or totality.

This is not just something yogis or siddhas developed by getting drunk on amrita and coming up with things at random.[1] Each point is very definite and very precise. It has been possible to develop a world of precision, a world with a definite clear way of thinking and a functional world, without those other relative areas we have been talking about. It is not only highly possible but it has happened and is happening.

There seem to be a lot of misunderstandings about mandalas. People say that a mandala is an object of meditation that you gaze at. Just by

gazing at these colored diagrams you are supposed to get turned on! But from the point of view of sanity, optical illusions or diagrammatic patterns are not crutches you could use to get onto a higher level.

The basic teaching of mandala has been presented 725 times, and that is in the lower tantras, on the level of kriyayoga, alone. Goodness knows how many mandalas there are in the higher tantras—millions of them! The numbers multiply as you go up in the yanas. There are six tantric yanas of which kriyayoga is only the first, and you have 725 mandalas there. As you go up to the level of the sixth yana, atiyoga, the mandalas multiply so many times that they finally become nonexistent. The boundaries begin to dissolve. This is such an invasion of privacy! That is why it is called freedom.

So taking these ideas and attitudes as a functional working basis, we should now be able to provide the conclusion for our seminar.

Visualizing a mandala deity can be approached from two different angles. One way is purely to relate to thought patterns, mind's game. Instead of visualizing Grand Central Station and dwelling on that, you might as well visualize something that means a lot. Eventually, you might visualize the mandala of Avalokiteshvara or Tara or Guhyasamaja or some other deity. That would be a kind of substitute. If you have to have crutches, why not make them out of gold rather than aluminum.

There is another approach to visualization. This is a sense of familiarity with mandala as we have discussed it in this seminar. You turn your attitude toward that sense of mandala with the understanding that you cannot grasp it or nearly grasp it, but such an area does exist. You turn your mind toward it and relate it with your sense of unknown territory and the mysteriousness of the whole of being. That sense of mysteriousness brings all kinds of space. You do not state everything fact by fact. You do not present yourself with a package deal in which everything is logically sound and solid and without any room. You present yourself with some doubt. There is still basic logic, such as that three times three makes nine or whatever, but at the same time you allow some gap, some doubt related to the possibility of a further journey that is necessary. One can turn one's attitude toward that. That is the beginning of the awakening process, a beginning toward giving up your logical game.

Eventually, as we get into the basic mandala as it is, with the whole understanding of samsaric pain and of the dharmadhatu, we realize that the teachings taught in the tradition are not just those of a particular

culture. The teachings taught in the language of the tradition are continually up-to-date. Ideally, we should be able to relate to the visualization of a mandala as our own portrait, our own discovery, rather than seeing it as some aspect of a foreign culture that we are dwelling on.

Interestingly, in the Chinese tradition, bodhisattvas, and even certain herukas, or tantric deities, have been depicted wearing Chinese imperial costumes. In India, of course, the place where tantra originated, the deities are depicted as, for instance, Aryan kings, wearing crowns inlaid with the five kinds of jewels along with the rest of the costume of an Aryan king. From this point of view, visualization practice is not entirely anthropomorphic. It is designed or taught for all the six realms of the world: the animal realm, the hell realm, hungry ghost realm, the realm of the jealous gods, realm of the gods, and the human realm.

The tantric approach to practice is absolute, not anthropomorphic. You might say that the hinayana and mahayana approaches are anthropomorphic, the mahayana approach somewhat less so. But the vajrayana's approach to practice is cosmic.[2]

This also goes for the mantras that go along with the visualizations. They are not regarded as definite words that make sense—like certain phrases that can keep your mind from freaking out. Mantra is regarded as the ultimate incantation. There is no room for mind to dwell when what you say is nonsense—transcendental nonsense. It does not make any sense, but at the same time it does make sense because of its nonsense quality. It is just an echo, like the sound of one hand clapping a nonexistent sound.

Usually mantra is regarded as an abstract sound rather than something that means something. In that respect, mantra recitation is quite different from the usual idea of prayer. It may be closer to the Hesychastic idea of prayer found in the Greek Orthodox tradition. The *Philokalia* talks about repeating a prayer over and over. At the beginning you repeat it with intention, with direction, with a sense of purpose. You go on and on and on. Finally, you are uncertain who is saying the prayer and who is not saying it. You lose the sense of direction. You actually become free of the sense of direction rather than losing it in the sense of getting confused. You become less confused, therefore you become more accommodating. Eventually, the prayer begins to repeat as though it were the beat of your heart, as though it were repeating itself. In fact at that

point, the prayer is repeating you rather than you repeating the prayer. This kind of prayer has some connection with the mantric approach.

The mantric approach starts at the beginning, not even as a prayer but just as a certain cosmic sound that goes along with a certain cosmic visualization. The visualization might be of mandalas or various deities, maybe a six-armed deity with eighteen heads, holding different scepters in its hands, wearing a human skin with an elephant skin on top of it, wearing a tiger skin as a skirt and a crown of skulls, surrounded by flame, and uttering magic words such as HUM and PHAT. Such visualizations are very vivid. However, they are by no means pop art. They are transcendental art. These expressions become extraordinarily powerful and vivid and real to the extent that we are able to give up the boundaries of the dualistic approach of evaluating them. Once there is no more evaluation, the whole thing becomes very lively, very real.

The problem that arises for us in relation to this is that first we have to have a definite sense of commitment to ourselves. We have to be willing to work with the samsaric mandala to begin with, without looking for something better. We have to make the best of samsaric situations and work with them. After we have worked with samsaric situations, we gradually develop an awareness of the background, or environment, in which the samsaric mandala functions. We begin to discover that there is something more than just this world alone, than the world in our dualistic sense of it.

I do not mean to say that there is another world somewhere else, like the moon, Mars, or the heavens. There is another world in the sense that there is another discovery that we could make. We see a blade of grass, but we could see further into its blade-of-grassness. We could see the blade of grass in its own full totality. Then we would see the greenness of the blade of grass as part of its innate nature. Its whole being is actually being, without any confirmation. It just happens to be a really true blade of grass. When the mandala experience begins to occur, we see the true world, 100 percent, without distortion, without conceptualizing it.

It takes a lot of steps, and it seems that we cannot begin unless we are willing to begin at the beginning.

Student: Apropos of the beginning, you said the dualistic misunderstanding comes right at the beginning. Does a glimpse or taste of the nondualistic totality also come at the beginning?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. That is why a misunderstanding was possible. The misunderstanding had to be accommodated somewhere. So we can't condemn the beginning as a mistake in the fashion of the "Fall of Man."

Student: In the question period following the previous talk, you seemed to be speaking of a sense of greater spaciousness in connection with prajna. You connected nonduality more with jnana. I don't really understand this.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Prajna is like what we experience in connection with our discussions in this and the other talks. We talk about jnana and the level of absolute totality, but in so doing we are relating to it from an outsider's point of view, we are relating to it as an experience. That way it becomes prajna, or knowledge—information. It is prajna until we completely and totally identify with the whole thing. The process of being is not learning how to be. Learning and just being are different.

S: Your discussion of vajra suggests that it operates on the prajna level, that it is subject-and-object oriented. Is that correct?

TR: The vajra experience of intellect is on the jnana level. It is just totally seeing through everything. That transcends prajna, which is still somewhat of an adolescent approach.

S: On the nondualistic level, can there be such things as buddha families and prajna and the world of distinctions?

TR: That is exactly what we have been saying is the case in this talk. The level of nondual reality is the realm of jnana, therefore there is discriminating-awareness wisdom happening all the time. On that level, there is in fact a living world, a much more living one than we are experiencing.

S: It sounds like there would be a contradiction there, because to discriminate is to find duality.

TR: There is no problem with finding duality. We are speaking here of the relative world in purely psychological terms. We are talking about relative fixation, relative hang-ups, rather than seeing things as two. That is not regarded as dualistic fixation but still as discriminating awareness. I mean, an enlightened person is able to go down the street and take his bus—as a matter of act, he can do it much better than we can, because he is always there.

Student: In terms of beginning at the beginning, what is the role of meditation practice?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Meditation practice right at the beginning is acceptance of being a fool. You continually acknowledge that you are making a fool out of yourself pretending to be meditating, rather than believing you are transcending something or being holy or good. If you start from that matter-of-fact level, acknowledging your self-deceptions, then you begin to pick up on something more than being a fool. There's something in it. You begin to learn to give. You no longer have to defend yourself constantly. So that practice involves tremendous discipline in your daily living situation. It is not just sitting practice alone, but your total life situation becomes part of your meditation practice. That provides a lot of ground for relating with things very simply, without concepts involved. And then at some stage, of course, you begin to lose any sense of effort or self-conscious awareness that you are meditating. The boundaries of your meditation begin to dissolve, and it becomes nonmeditation or all meditation.

S: Isn't that initial wanting also spiritual materialism?

TR: It is, but at least it is quite genuine rather than pretended. That makes things simpler. Obviously, at the beginning you feel you want to achieve something. That is okay, and it helps you get into the practice. In the case of spiritual materialism, the deceptive aspect is that you do not even face the facts of your neurosis. Each time you practice something, you think in terms of getting some magical power, trying to become powerful instead of unmasking yourself. But without that initial wanting there would be no stepping-stone, no language. Seeing that situation is exactly what I mean by regarding yourself as a fool.

Student: Rinpoche, could you please explain again what you mean by accommodating?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is a sense of nondefensiveness, accommodating richness or expansiveness and the magnetic qualities without making a solid boundary. It is not an effort; it is just letting things be accommodated without any relative relationship.

Student: How does this highly intellectual talk get us closer to nirvana and farther from samsara?

Trungpa Rinpoche: If you approach it from that angle, it doesn't.

S: Of course not, but isn't that the angle from which it is being approached?

TR: We always have to speak in relative language, which automatically becomes intellectual.

S: Granted the need to speak in relative language, I have still found this talk quite confusing.

TR: That seems to be the whole point. We should realize that there is some discrepancy, that everything is not clear-cut and black and white. Feeling confused is the starting point. When you are confused, you don't believe in your confusion as being the answer. Because you are confused, you feel that the answer must be something else more clear. That invites further questioning, which contains the answer within itself. One begins to work on oneself that way.

In other words, the teaching is not meant to provide something sound and solid and precise, in such a way that you don't have to work for anything and the teaching feeds you constantly. The reason for presenting the teaching is to make you work further, to confuse you more. And you have to get through the confusion. The teaching is encouragement to find the stepping-stone that is closest to you—which is confusion.

Student: Would you say that unconditioned, nondualistic energies have as resources the energies that are still conditioned?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I wouldn't say that. The unconditioned energies are self-perpetuating, because there are no relations involved. They exist like space itself, which does not have a central point or an edge. It remains as it is by itself, feeds itself, lives by itself. The conditioned energies are also accommodated within this unconditioned one. Somehow the unconditioned energy can express itself in terms of the conditioned ones. But it doesn't survive or feed on them. That's why conditioned energy is redundant from the point of view of unconditioned energy. It doesn't need to exist. That is why it stagnates. There is no outlet for it, and it becomes a self-perpetuating dying and rotting process. The only way it can maintain itself is to get energy from itself, and it is already very stagnant.

Student: You mentioned that the Chinese developed different visualizations for the various deities and pointed out that the tradition is always up to date. I was wondering if we American Buddhists might develop our own visualizations of the deities that might be more appropriate for us.

S: For example, mahakalas in blue jeans.[3]

Trungpa Rinpoche: Fat chance!

In China, the process was very unself-conscious. It just evolved that way. But in the West, we are in a highly self-conscious state about culture—it has already been raped. All of art has already been raped and made into a conditioned situation. The tradition would get made into pop art or collage—having a Tibetan painting with an astronaut walking across it or something of that nature. The situation with regard to art has become quite degenerate.

The point is that if we could make the process less self-conscious, something could develop, but since we already have a self-conscious world, that would probably be very difficult. In fact, the same problem existed in Tibet. The Chinese took the whole thing very freely, but the Tibetans were very self-conscious about their culture. They regarded it as inferior to the Aryan culture of India. The Indians used to refer to Tibet as the preta-puri, the place of hungry ghosts. They regarded it as uncultured and savage. To the Tibetans became very self-conscious about it. Therefore, instead of creating Tibetan deities, they decided to take refuge in the Aryan culture from the beginning. So in Tibet there are no Tibetans in the form of Vairochana or anything like that. That is an interesting analogy.

Student: When an offering is made in the form of a mandala, what is that and how is it done? For example, Naropa is described as offering Tilopa a mandala.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that is not a mandala in the sense of a psychological or spiritual one. It's just a portrait of the world with the continents and oceans and everything. Making that offering represents giving up your ground so that you have nowhere to live. That is the ultimate sense of "refugee."

Student: Is there such a thing as a pure expression of pure energy?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It would mean getting out of the whirlpool of the relative world. Then it would become open for the very reason that it would no longer be dependent on the relative world.

Student: From the point of view of "not-two," how does compassion arise?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Just not dwelling on a point of reference provides

a lot of space to be. Compassion is open space in which things can be accommodated. It contrasts strongly with our repulsing situations because we are not willing to accommodate anything. So compassion is creating open space, accepting things happening.

S: How do you create that openness?

TR: If you have to create it, then it is no longer compassion. I suppose, to begin with, in order to develop compassion you have to be willing to be alone or lonely. You are completely and totally in a desolate situation, which is also open space at the same time. The development of compassion is not a matter of acquiring a partnership with things, but rather of letting everything be open. So the sense of loneliness or aloneness is the real starting point for compassion.

Student: In the beginning of the seminar, you talked a lot about boundary, and now you have talked about the mandala as being boundless. Can you clarify that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The samsaric mandala is divided by boundaries, because there are certain emotions and psychological states; they are there because you maintain them to survive. The total mandala, the mandala of totality, is not dependent on boundaries at all. Therefore, its expressions are regarded as different aspects of one totality. The accommodating aspect of space and the penetrating [or expansive] aspect of space are simply different aspects of the same thing. You could talk about the light-giving aspect of the sun as the basis for timing our lives—that is all talking about different aspects of the same thing. There are no boundaries there, just different expressions.

S: Should the boundaries be considered as a real principle of reality or existence?

TR: Boundaries happen like taking a snapshot. You take a snapshot, say, at 1/125th of a second. You take the snapshot, and it is frozen on a piece of paper.

Student: What is the relationship between what you talked about earlier, experiencing the charnel ground through a sense of insecurity, and seeing the totality, which seems to be the key to the buddha mandala?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Totality shares the attributes of insecurity. When the samsaric mind views totality, it sees insecurity, a threat, a place to die. Totality is extremely threatening because there is nothing to hold on

to. It is completely vast space. Whereas from its own point of view, totality does not contain any kind of reference point. Therefore, the question of threat or insecurity does not arise at all.

We have to stop at this point. It would be good to work further on the things we discussed, reflect on them and relate them with your experience. What we have talked about is the meaning of space, which is something that, in our everyday life, we all automatically face. In the city or on the farm, in our family situation or at our job, we are constantly involved with space. So the relationship with the mandala goes on—at least the irritating aspect. It is not something we can turn off, thinking, "Now I've gotten my money's worth, I'll just switch it off and forget it." No matter how much we try to forget it, it continues to go on. So it is not merely a matter of having acquired some information; there is some element of commitment, because the totality of your life is involved. We have to relate with our life situations and find out more.

Part Two

MANDALA OF THE FIVE BUDDHA FAMILIES

Karmê Chöling, 1974

ONE

The Basic Ground

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND the mandala of the five buddha families, I think it is necessary for us to realize the implications of the mandala principle in terms of our psychological state and our awareness in our everyday lives.

First of all, there are some points concerning the ground that is in some sense serving our being. That is the ground of the five buddha families. The five buddha-family principles are not five separate entities. Rather, what we have is one principle manifested in five different aspects. We could speak of five different manifestations of one basic energy: a manifestation of its richness, of its fertility, of its intelligence, and so forth.

We are talking about one basic intelligence, so to speak, or one energy. A wide area of confusion and wisdom exists in the background of all the five principles, whether we look at them in their buddha, or enlightened, form or in their confused form. There is a basic pattern that is common to all that. It is the potentiality for enlightenment and the actual experience of confusion, pain, and so forth.

We are experiencing our existence, our being. If you look further into what that is, intellectually you can analyze it in all kinds of different ways. But if you are trying to find out what it is all about in terms of actual experience, it is hard to find the actual experience. It is hard, very hard, to find even a clear experience of confusion, one that is not colored by the rest of the emotions. In the actual experience, there is also a sense of uncertainty concerning existence or nonexistence (both being the

same thing). It is not that we have a vague perception. It is a very clear perception, but it is undefinably clear. It is basically confusion. That kind of confusion is all-pervasive confusion; it happens throughout our life, in our waking hours and during our sleep. There is a rich and thick bank of uncertainty.

If we get into religious or metaphysical terminology, we could call it a soul or ego or godhead, or any number of other things. But if we do not want to use those kinds of terms because we do not know exactly what they mean, then we have to try to look as directly as possible at this experience without any preconceptions, without any terminology or labels. If we look closely, the closest experience we can get is a sense of unnameable confusion. This is a unique confusion, because it does not have a clear and distinct quality of "now I am confused" at all. You cannot even define it by saying it is confusion. And that is the kind of nondual state of confusion that goes on throughout all life.

Experience comes out of that and dissipates back into it. Energies arise and emotions appear. It all takes place within this one all-pervasive state of being, or area. I think it is very important for us to realize this background as the basic ground of everything and to understand how it arises or does not arise.

In traditional tantric imagery, this experience, or state of being, is referred to as the charnel ground. It is the place of birth and the place of death. It is the place you came out of and the place you return to. The modern equivalent of that, I suppose, is the hospital—the place where you are born and die.

Anyhow, this gigantic hospital is quite messy, but unnameably messy and nondual—that is the one point. Usually, when we think of there being no duality, no split, no schizophrenia, we tend to think that this is some kind of meditative state where there are no longer any dualistic distinctions. Therefore, everything must be okay. But somehow things don't work that way here. Actually, we seem to have nondual samsara at this point. This is quite interesting.

Obviously, following logic, if you have duality or a split personality, there must be something in the background that was one thing to begin with. Out of that one comes many. One of the interesting things here is that somehow that basic confusion acts as a continual sense of awareness. This goes beyond purely human consciousness. It covers animals and humans and all the rest of existence.

Somehow, though it is a confused state, it does not seem to contain any doubt as such. As soon as you begin to have doubt, then there is a play back and forth. But this state is pervasive, so there is no room for this kind of play of doubt. Maybe this is the background for doubt, but there is no doubt as such. It seems to be a big, gigantic state of BLAH. People have misunderstood this as a mystical experience.

Perhaps in some sense it actually is a mystical experience, because unless you have some glimpse of this level of basic ignorance, you cannot have a glimpse of the rest. From this point of view, maybe finding the worst aspect of oneself is the first glimpse of the possibility of being better.

This is the basic ground of the mandala of the five buddha principles in both their samsaric and their nirvanic aspects. Both aspects have a common relationship with this background.

Well, we could talk a lot more about this basic ground, but I do not want to create any further sense of glamour regarding it. We already have some idea of it, and it would be very good if you had a chance to look into it further yourself.

Student: Is this confusion the cloudy mind of the seventh consciousness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It goes back further than that.

S: But does it manifest in the cloudy mind as well?

TR: This is the alaya level, which goes back further than the seventh consciousness. It has some kind of texture of being, of existence. It is not cloudy in the sense of an obstruction of vision or intelligence. That would be more on the perception level. In this case, it is more sort of basically clogged up, rather than there being something that is projected and then clouded over. This is more on an existential level. That is why it can be so transparent and act as a constant awareness of ego, of me. You have a feeling of "me." Before you mention me, there is a sense of this direction. Before you actually define it as a reference to me, there is a sense of direction toward this area and a sense of heaviness and solidity.

S: You mean a holding back? One is always holding back or pushing something?

TR: No, I mean even before that. This is a kind of self-existing awareness that contains an automatic reference to you already, so you don't have to hold back or project. Before you do anything, there is the first

instant that makes you start from here, rather than from all over the place. Then you have a starting point somewhere.

S: Is this something that is carried with you from one life to another?

TR: I suppose so, because belief in life is in itself a grasping of being. Yes. Otherwise, the continuity of life's thread is broken.

S: I have heard something about ego being continuous over many lives. Would this be a sense of that? It is somehow nondualistic but it is still a tendency to identify "me"?

TR: Yes. There is that chain reaction that is basically a broken chain reaction, but it is still obviously a chain, because one link constantly interlinks with another one.

S: Is this confusion something that we are aware of in our own lives personally, and is it also connected at the same time with some kind of more primordial confusion that we pass through each time we come into another life?

TR: I think we are aware of it, not as something clearly defined in terms of concepts and ideas, but as you said, it is primordial. It is the first cause of reactions. It is the first activator, or the first ground that activation could come from.

S: And this activation brings us into this form that we call body and mind?

TR: Yes. There is a sense of this and that to begin with, and of me and mine.

Student: I'm a little unclear about the seventh and eighth consciousnesses and the level of duality here. It seems that what you're talking about must be a relative nonduality in comparison to, say, the nondual unconditioned energy of the dharmakaya. What you're talking about seems to be based on some kind of an ego notion or an ego-based perception. How can this be nondual? Is there some kind of relative nonduality here?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The reference point exists for the sake of the reference point, I suppose. As far as this particular state is concerned, it is seemingly nondual, because the definition of duality is based on perceiving "that" because of "this." But this level of ignorance does not have the facilities to separate, to make this distinction. This is not because it is so highly unified with all the energies, as with the dharmakaya or enlightened nonduality, but because it has not developed to that extent.

This is primitive nonduality. It is sort of primordial, or rather primeval—like an amoeba or something like that. But it does have a very low level of intelligence, therefore it has awareness in it as well. It is on the level of a grain of sand.

S: So this level of consciousness can never recognize itself? It has no self-consciousness?

TR: That's right, it doesn't have self-consciousness, but it has a sense of trust in oneself. It is sort of homey, you know; it's easy to operate on that basis, on the basis of that homey quality. If you are in doubt, you just blank yourself, then you proceed. It is very convenient in some sense.

S: Are you suggesting that some kind of manipulation is possible with this? That when you're in doubt, you just blank yourself?

TR: Well, that's not exactly manipulation; it's just the best that you can do. If you feel uncertain, you go back to the source. That is what we usually do, you know. If you lose a job somewhere else, you come back to your hometown; you stay with your mommy and daddy for a while.

S: In books, you often read about mystical experiences that people have had where they say there was nobody there, no me, just a big void. Do you think they could be experiencing this basic confusion you're talking about here?

TR: It depends how far people reach. I think it is possible that they just manage to hit this level and do not get beyond it. This is like what is said in relation to tantric practice, about doing visualization without having had a glimpse of shunyata. It just leads to ego. It depends on your level of fundamental clarity and luminosity. You might experience a state of nonfunctionality, nonduality, maybe even void, but without any light. That doesn't say very much. It's like a deep coma.

S: That would be where your clarity has broken down?

TR: If there's no clarity, things would be purely in a state of stupidity. It seems that the voidness, or emptiness, of shunyata occurs automatically if there's some sense of clarity. But it seems that there is some clarity there at the same time, and this is the seed for the five buddha principles, or the reason why the five buddha principles do exist. Those principles are a statement of clarity in the different areas. You have clarity that is vajra-like, clarity that is ratna-like, padma-like, karma-like, and buddha-like. All the energies are a state of clarity and luminosity.

S: So you can't skip the stages of developing clarity and just jump to a clear experience of shunyata?

TR: That's possible, but I don't think it is very healthy. You could be overwhelmed by such brilliance; it would just make you more blind. It would be like having someone switch on the sun at midnight.

S: Is there a normal, effective way to discover what that light is?

TR: Light?

S: The clarity.

TR: There obviously has to be something, otherwise there would be no relationship between the two worlds [of confusion and enlightenment], so to speak. The only way seems to be breaking through the levels of comfort that your stupidity feels. You know, when you are on a level of this kind of stupidity, there is a sense of comfort, a sense of indulgence. So I suppose the first step is becoming homeless, so that you have nowhere to go back to.

S: Does this mean that reaching a certain degree of despair is essential?

TR: I think so, yes. That has been said.

S: Would this despair mean feeling that there's no way out of your neurosis, or does it come from feeling that there *is* a way to work with it?

TR: You do feel possibilities of working with it, but not of shaking off the whole thing completely. Then there is also despair arising from a sense of temporary inconvenience—you can't return back to your cozy stupid home.

Student: With this nondual confusion being so diffuse, is there any particular reason why there are just five buddha families? Is it possible there might be another one? Why have five buddha families arisen out of this ground of confusion? Is there any particular meaning to that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: There's no particular meaning to that. It just organically happened that way. Somehow everything breaks into four sections, along with the middle section. For instance, we have four directions. Of course, you can invent numerous directions, but even if you have a hundred directions, they are still based on the logic of the four directions. That's just how things work. There is perception and there is appreciation of that.

In the tantric texts we sometimes find reference to 100 families and sometimes there are even 999 families. But these are exaggerated forms

of the five principles. There don't have to be five, particularly, but that's as close as you can get. It's sort of like a baker's dozen.

Student: I didn't quite follow how this basic awareness functions as a home.

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's the closest thing we can come back to. It's like reducing ourselves to being deaf and dumb—you don't have to pay attention to too many things. You just simplify everything into one livable situation. That's the concept of hominess—you can shut off the rest of the world, shut out the world outside. You can come back and have dinner and a good sleep. It's a primitive kind of thing, like a nest.

S: So being out there—

TR: Is more demanding.

S: Is what you're speaking of prepersonal though? If I think of myself as having a meal and going to sleep, it feels very personal. I'm home, and that's very personal; it's me doing it. Is that what you're talking about, or is it before that?

TR: That's right, before that, prior to that.

Student: I have an image sometimes of being inside a rock, which would clearly be pre-this. It's that kind of state.

Trungpa Rinpoche: That's right, yes. It's vague in some sense, it's unnameable. It doesn't have any kind of manifest expressions.

S: I have a sense of despair or pain that comes from the realization that I can't go back to that level of stupidity again. It's like I'm stuck at this mediocre stage. Does that have something to do with the despair you were talking about, that one can't return?

TR: In some sense. Different people would have different reactions. Some people would like to go back, because it is much easier. They have done it before; it is prerehearsed. Other people feel that it is too much to do it all over again. It depends on the level of one's intelligence and how much one has already gone sour on it.

Student: You're speaking of this basic background as a samsaric approach of some kind. Is that the case?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is a sort of feeling of me, this [*places his hand on his chest*] direction, a kind of primordial ego. If we speak of threefold ignorance, this is the first one, the ignorance of being. This relates to the

basic state of being, primordial existence. In some sense this is a very refined version of samsara; in some sense it is a very crude one. The reason it is categorized as samsaric is that it is based on the preservation of oneself. Whether it is a refined job or a crude job, it still has to do with the preservation of one's existence. It is pro-ego, definitely. It may be unconsciously so, but it is still pro-ego. It is connected with building something up rather than letting go. Still, in terms of the path, it is a necessary stepping-stone, a working basis.

TWO

The Birth of the Path

IN CONTINUING OUR discussion of the fundamentals of ego experience, I would like to make clear to you that what we are saying here is based on personal experience. We are taking more of an intuitive approach than an intellectual one.

A lot of energy comes along with the primitive ignorance. The basic function of that ignorance is a sense of boredom and familiarity, and that produces a desire for some further excitement, further adventure. That adventure becomes somewhat neurotic, because of our not having surveyed the ground and ourselves. This is the point where duality begins to happen.

At the beginning, duality is just a way of killing boredom; then there is the realization that taking this kind of chance is very dangerous. As we continue on, things become more threatening. We begin to develop various perspectives, various tones of emphasis on various types of styles. At this point, what are known as the five buddha families manifest in five confused styles: an aggressive, intellectual one; an enriching one; a seductive, magnetizing one; a highly active one; and so on. The expressions that tend to come out at this point are ones that have some quality of desperation in relation to the basic ground. The desperation is based on [and takes the form of] the style that one is able to operate in, in order to ignore the basic ignorance.

In other words, all the things that happen in confused mind are fundamentally a way of overcoming boredom and entertaining oneself, on one hand, and a way of taking one's mind off threats, on the other. The

main threat is that if one happened to return to the background, one might see the sense of embarrassing confusion that exists there and the struggle to conceal one's private parts.

There are various levels of ignorance. The first level of ignorance is connected with having a body. One's style of life is affected by what kind of body one has. One's behavior pattern is molded to one's body. There is a natural body consciousness that takes place. You may be big or small, fat or thin; whatever your bodily makeup is like, you create a way of organizing a smooth operation of behavior in accordance with that. That kind of natural self-consciousness takes place all the time. If you are cold, you never think, "My body is cold," but rather, "I am cold," "I am hungry," and so forth. There is a natural tendency to identify one's body with one's state of existence, or being.

So that kind of basic ignorance is constantly there, and whenever there is an area that is uncertain, a slight gap, or something unexpected—if something does not go along with the program one has set up for one's own behavior—then an element of panic and uncertainty arises which then pushes one to take certain actions. These actions are connected with the five styles. We are not talking about which of the five styles might be our personal style, but about a general, almost haphazard or random type of improvisation that takes place constantly in our lives—trying to fill the gap and trying to entertain.

How does this experience of the five buddha principles relate with the path of buddhadharma? Somehow, within that sense of lost ground, within that continual self-consciousness, there is also at the same time a sense of intelligence. This intelligence actually does not come from anywhere, it does not have an origin. Or perhaps at this point we should say we are uncertain where it comes from. In any case, there is this intelligence that tends to comment on the things that take place. It begins to see the functions of the self-conscious, basic, primordial ego. It sees the basic ego as it is, and it also sees the various trips, so to speak, that we get into to safeguard ourselves from boredom or whatever. So there is this constant commenting that takes place, which is the beginning of the path.

This intelligence is an inborn intelligence of some kind, one that is without origin or birth as such. It is usually awakened with the help of a teacher or by seeing someone else's example, their approach to life and their wisdom. It is not a simple case of the teacher's giving birth to that

intelligence in one's being. It is impossible for such a direct transplant to take place, since the intelligence is already part of our being. But quite certainly, this intelligence can be awakened.

The process of awakening that intelligence is basically one of sabotage or of instigating an uprising. It sets chaos into the well-settled programs and policies that develop with ego's space. The intelligence often works with emotions and also often works along with ego's tendencies, so it is somewhat transparent [as far as taking sides is concerned]. It does not always act as the saboteur; sometimes it just works as a kind of hired workman who complains heavily to his employer but at the same time goes along with him. It works in both areas. It works with ego, which uses intelligence, but at the same time there is an undercurrent or a kind of percolation happening. This is the birth of the path taking place.

This process exaggerates the neurosis of the five principles further, because a very threatening situation is developing. Things are getting very personal and much, much closer to the heart.

Student: Are the styles that arise determined karmically—is there a certain sketch that exists in you that you automatically fulfill? Or is there some spontaneous process of intelligence involved?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The process is natural and extremely organic. There are no particular guidelines. Awareness just approaches the closest thing that is available and does it. But there is obviously some kind of style that is connected with the habitual patterns of the elements—water flows, fire burns, that kind of natural thing. There is no intelligence operating at that level except the partial intelligence that is trying to avoid seeing the original background. That seems to be the only logical or intelligent function that is happening. The rest of it is very sort of animal-level.

Student: If the neurotic styles are based on one's body type, what would the five enlightened styles be based on?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, that is just an analogy. I suppose one does [base one's behavior pattern on one's body], but I don't think that has anything to do with one's particular neurosis or reality. That's just a way of functioning—if you have a body, you have to behave in a certain way. But there are no particular guidelines.

Student: Is there any reason that one person would fall into one style rather than another? Is there something in one's personal makeup?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it is a question of the different forms of irritation that come up in relating with the background of ego, irritations connected with how you want to go about covering up or ignoring. There are a lot of aspects of that which can be dealt with in different ways.

S: Would this carry over from one lifetime to another?

TR: Not necessarily. It is simply a day-to-day kind of thing.

Student: It seems that we are working through the eight levels of consciousness.[1] We talked earlier about the alaya, and then you started talking about the basic notion of duality coming into the nyön yi [the seventh consciousness]. How does this apply to the other states of consciousness? As we extend into the other six consciousnesses, does that simply further the confusion?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Theoretically, what we are talking about here happens at the level of the sixth consciousness, which is mind, the mental faculty, which then relates with the sense perceptions. But I think this could also cover a lot of areas other than consciousness, for instance, feeling, perception, impulse—those other skandhas.[2] This is a very early stage; nothing is really properly fixed. This is just the level of groping around and trying to develop a system. No rules and regulations or styles have been developed; there is just a groping. It's the level of feeling, the second skandha.

Student: When you were talking about how these styles are motivated, you said that one aspect of the motive was avoiding boredom. Then you mentioned avoiding the threat that one might fade into the background. I am confused. You mentioned those two things, and I don't see how they fit together.

Trungpa Rinpoche: In fact, there seem to be [not just those two, but] a lot of motivations. Those are just random choices. There are hundreds of other possibilities connected with all kinds of areas of irritation and uncertainty. There are hundreds of areas of irritation and uncertainty—lots of them. And then there is just roaming around in animal stupidity and having things just happen to coincide with one situation or another, which is another type of approach. Traditionally, motivation here is

divided into three sections connected with passion, aggression, and ignorance. But within that framework, there are lots of descriptions. Supposedly, there are 84,000 variations.

Student: You seemed to talk about a blockage in connection with ignorance and confusion. Is this a blockage that prevents us from exploring the whole question of whether we exist or not, the whole question of existence and nonexistence?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Somehow the whole idea of existence and nonexistence never came up. But there is the possibility of its coming up. Once that idea has been heard, then there is the possibility of nonexistence—of intelligence looking back at oneself and finding and cutting through various trips. Until the idea of nonexistence has been heard, this possibility never comes up. So hearing the teachings can be very shocking. Until the teachings have been heard, things are seemingly smooth. There is a sort of gentleman's agreement that one never talks about those things, or in this case, even thinks about them.

Student: Was Naropa's jumping off roofs and going into sandalwood fires symbolic of his exploring this whole question of existence and nonexistence and somehow breaking through the blockages?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think we find all kinds of connections in his life with that. He marries the king's daughter and then the kingdom disappears, and all kinds of other things of that nature happen. All those things are very much connected with that. There is a reality of some kind, but it is a very painful reality. Then, after you have experienced the painful reality and feel that you have done a good job in relating with it, then somehow you realize the whole thing doesn't exist. This is also very painful, because you thought that at least you had achieved something. You thought you had broken the ice, and then suddenly no ice exists to be broken. That is the kind of thing that makes up the nature of the path.

Student: Does the fact that there are 84,000 styles mean that it is not possible to go through the human condition in a way that is not conditioned by one of them? Or is there another kind of humanity that is free of that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is not limited to 84,000, but there are hundreds

of thousands of them. In other words, you cannot have a complete manual of what the human condition might be. You cannot follow all the details; you can only look at an aerial view of the situation. You can see where those styles are derived from and where they are heading (which would be the same thing). It's like the analogy of all rivers flowing into the ocean. You can predict that much, even though you can't name all the rivers in the world. There are some overall conclusions that you can draw. In this case, the basic point is trying to exist, trying to live through one's life without being hurt, hurt in any way, even slightly hurt; trying just to have complete freedom and pleasure. And in some sense the teachings represent the opposite of that. They say that that is not particularly the way. Not only can you not achieve survival, you cannot actually exist, let alone survive. Survival is the opposite [of the right approach]. You know, you have the wrong end of the stick. So then we are back to square one.

Student: I thought the previous question was whether it was possible to avoid those styles and just have an open experience of humanity without being conditioned by them.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Those styles are the contents. It isn't possible, I can't imagine it.

S: How does the multiplicity and variety of the styles come out of that one basic energy?

TR: If there is one basic energy or one basic approach, that does not have to produce another *one,* but it could produce many. If you have one big bad weather, there are hundreds of raindrops. It is possible, it is conceivable, and it happens. It like the blind men's version of the elephant—you have different versions. From the very fact that everybody agrees together that they are blind comes a lot of other conclusions.

S: It seems there would have to be some duality or something for this oneness to be affected by.

TR: It happens as you come out of the oneness, I suppose. When you are on your way out, you break up into different reflections.

S: But what is breaking you?

TR: What's breaking you is that there is more room to play about. When you are not restricted by the oneness, there is a sense of breaking off from it—or a better expression would be, indulging in the freedom—in different ways. You find different ways of indulging in freedom.

If you come from the same home as your six brothers and seven sisters, when each one of you steps beyond the restrictions of your parents' rule, you will establish different lifestyles, just because of no longer being restricted by your parents' command. The break takes place because you want proof that you exist. And the different styles arise from that.

S: But if the basic background is the same for everybody, how do the different styles come to be different?

TR: Because the basic background is the same, therefore there can be differences. Otherwise, if the basic background were different, then the expressions would be the same. That's worth thinking about actually. The basic background is one, not exactly one in the sense of one entity, but one in the sense of being all-pervasive, filling everywhere. Then something happens out of that that allows us to step out. And as we step out, there are possibilities of moving about in that big room. Those possibilities come just from the very fact that that area is a big one, an all-encompassing one.

S: So it's an interaction between you and the space.

TR: It is like having a big floor—you finally begin to dance, to move about. You move because there is oneness of you and the space. The oneness allows you to move more. It gives you some kind of freedom. In this case, that freedom is somewhat distorted, but nevertheless the process is one of looking for freedom of some kind, or demonstrating one's freedom.

Student: Is there some kind of predetermined relationship between a particular style of ignorance and intelligence as represented in the mandala and the form that it takes on the human level? Is it all predetermined before it takes human form, or is it something more socialized, something that develops as one grows up living with one's six brothers and seven sisters and then goes out into the world?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is very hard to answer. I think it is more of an accident in some sense, somewhat a matter of chance. But there is some kind of determining factor that tends to create that chance itself. So, if I may say so, it's both; it has both elements in it at the same time. It is not so well defined. You are prone to a lot of accidents. And the more your intelligence develops and the more prepared for the teachings you become, the more you are prone to accidents. Somehow these accidents come out of some kind of intelligence that is based on the weakening of

the basic strategy. The basic strategy begins to fall apart slightly, so there are less defense mechanisms taking place. Therefore, you are prone to more accidents.

Student: You talked about there being the basic all-pervasive oneness, and then all of a sudden there is a duality situation of some kind, which I understood as the first skandha. What I don't understand is that you said the reason one can move about is that one is one with the space. It's a situation of being one and not being one at the same time, which seems quite paradoxical.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think that is the case.

Well, we could intellectualize the whole thing and turn it into Madhyamaka logic. But we should try as much as possible not to do that. Using an experiential approach at this point is more efficacious. So, [experientially speaking, the point is] that in order to accomplish an experience, you have to have a chance to dance with it. You have to have a chance to play, to explore. And then each style of exploration that takes place, we could say, is a different manifestation. Nevertheless it is all part of one big game. It's all the same thing. This is like the traditional analogy that says the beads of a mala [a rosary] are one, not a hundred, because if there are a hundred pieces, you can't have one mala.

S: Is there something about the totality of the ignorance, the totality of the way the ignorance covers the ground, that is the same as the way each one of these primordial energies also covers the ground? Experientially, I mean.

TR: Yes. Otherwise, you couldn't function. I mean, you do have some driving force behind you.

S: So there is a certain way that intelligence is relating with the totality of the ignorance?

TR: Yes. That is why the intelligence, that is, the message of the teachings, becomes more threatening: there is no room left for escape. The whole area is completely covered.

S: Can your basic energy change in the course of your life, say, as you move from childhood to adulthood?

TR: I suppose you can change your opinion about things, but the basic energy remains the same. Moving from childhood to adulthood is not particularly a big deal. It's just a question of becoming professional. It's like learning to open a wine bottle with a corkscrew. The first time,

you may spill the wine all over; the second and the third time you get better; by the fifth time you are good at it. That development has nothing to do with the basic energy particularly. It's just improving your mind-body coordination.

Student: You spoke of trying to fill the gap. Is the gap the same for all people?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is not so much a question of whether the gap is the same gap, but how the boundary is, whether the boundary is fat or thin. The gap is always the same. The gap depends on the boundary, I suppose.

S: I don't understand. Is the gap boredom, or what is it?

TR: Anything. The gap is something that you cannot utilize as part of your energy. It is something slightly foreign, but it is still part of you. It could be boredom, uncertainty, ignorance—any gap, any absence of ego, for that matter (which comes later, I suppose).

S: Is this a sense of panic that is a form of intelligence? Is this a manifestation of intelligence we are talking about?

TR: It depends what happens after you panic. There is a sense of intelligence in the panic. If, after you have panicked, you do not resort again to more entertainment, if you let yourself be suspended a little bit, then that panic is much closer to reality, more dharmic, if I may use that word.

S: More precisely aware of what is going on?

TR: Yes. The other panic is just, you know, diving into more deep water.

S: How do you let yourself be suspended? What is the process of going that way rather than diving?

TR: Well, in our discussion, we are trying to work with personal experience rather than developing guidelines of how to solve your problem. From that point of view, it is not so much a question of how to do it, but it is a question of somehow letting the panic possess us. Usually what happens is that when the panic arises, we try to brush it off and occupy ourselves with something else. It's like the traditional situation of a wife panicking and then the husband trying to calm down his freaky wife and make her feel secure. There is somebody very reasonable in us, who says, "This is your imagination. Everything is going to be okay. Don't worry. Take a rest. Have a glass of milk." But if rather than taking

this approach, you somehow go along with the panic and become the panic, there is a lot of room in the panic, because the panic is full of air bubbles, so to speak. It is very spacious—crackling all the time. It is very spacious and somewhat unpleasant on the surface, but, you know, it could be a real thing. So you probably find yourself suspended in the midst of panic, which is suspended in space. It sounds like a Coke ad!

Student: When one finds oneself in an irritating or uncomfortable situation, does one stay with one particular style through that whole situation, or does the style change from moment to moment? Or does it change along with each new problematic situation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It depends which particular area you are relating to. Sometimes it changes very speedily and sometimes it remains very solid. But it depends on your reference point.

S: On the type of problem that arises?

TR: Yes, on the type of problem that arises *and* also your reference point in the outside world coming back to you and how that relates with the whole situation. Usually, you act in accordance with that; you reshape your style.

S: Is everything simply conditioned by situations then? We have no personality, and after the basic split we simply produce the five types of responses in reaction to situations?

TR: We are not just shaped by situations. Somehow there is also an element present that is ignoring the basic ignorance at the same time. If you were purely reacting in accordance with the situation, if you didn't have a personality, when would you learn lessons? If you couldn't learn anything, you would simply be reacting to situations all the time. You would just bounce around like a Ping-Pong ball. You couldn't develop egohood; you couldn't become anything. You would just bounce around until you die, and even afterward . . . (well, we don't know about that).

S: My idea was not that there was no intelligence, but rather no particular style.

TR: Style is intelligence. You begin to accumulate information about when you went wrong and how you can go right. You build up a record of that, and then as you become more experienced, you become a professional. In fact, at that point, somebody else can come to you and consult you. You can give professional advice on how to handle situations. It may be that this is only an expression of ignorance at the professional

level, but nevertheless there is still some achievement there that takes place.

S: If the style itself is intelligence, and that intelligence is coming from the primordial energy, which is just one energy, I still don't see the time or the place where the variety takes place.

TR: I think there is a misunderstanding there about the primordial intelligence. When we talk about the primordial intelligence on the ego level, ego's primordial intelligence, we are not talking about one intelligence, we are talking about all intelligence. We are not dealing with the one and the many as such, we are talking about all and one at the same time. All and one at the same time.

S: That leads me to a question I've been wondering about. When there is the basic split from the alaya, the basic split that happens in the first skandha, does everybody have their own particular split, or is there one split that created all this?

TR: It's all-encompassing, all big space. You don't exist as one little confused fundamental ego. Your ego is big, gigantic. You have an all-pervasive ego. But somebody else might also have an all-pervasive ego, which is different from yours. I am not saying we are all the children of one ego. We all have our egos, we all have our primordial backgrounds. But each of them is big.

S: So there's an infinite number of alayas.

TR: Sure, yes. That was actually a major subject of debate in tantric philosophy. Certain people said that there is only one alaya, other people said that there are many. That argument went on. But then they discovered that there are many alayas.

Student: Rinpoche, in view of the experience of the present moment being all that there is, doesn't it follow that what we call personality or style is really just a collection of memories or echoes of present moments? Wouldn't it then not be an organic thing, but something that is merely dead, in the past, just tracks?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's possible that there is some memory that makes your trip harden as you go along in your life. It becomes more daring, a more professional troubleshooter, so to speak. But at the same time, you also depend on certain messages deriving from what actually does exist in life. Those messages tend to feed you, and you put them in the pigeonholes of your memory. But it is not exactly memory as such. It is just a kind of historical feeling preserved in your mind—the bad experi-

ence and the good experience. This is not memory in the sense of definite details. You get impressions of things as they are, and then those tend to coincide with what exists in your life situation. Then you feed your memory on those concepts. So the whole thing is built up out of a dream world, a fictional world of some kind.

Student: A lot of statements have been made about the basic split from the alaya, and this sounds very much like the one mind, which I didn't think was part of the Buddhist tradition. Is the alaya the same as the one mind? It would seem that one of them, the alaya, is the ignorant state and the other one, the one mind, is the enlightened state. Are there two sort of basic fields that we oscillate back and forth between? Or is it like in the Hindu tradition where the idea is to become one with the one mind?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, if you're theorizing you could dream up a big one mind that everybody is included in. But in terms of experience, which is very real to us, we experience a totality that is our totality. You may find your neighbors still running around in the samsaric battleground while you are experiencing the one mind. They are two entirely different worlds.

We are talking about experience in terms of what happens now, what is happening at this point to you. You might experience *the* one mind, but it is worthless to talk about whether *the* one mind is someone else's mind or whether you are getting into your own one mind. There's no point in splitting hairs at that point. Particularly since you have achieved the one mind already, you have no desire for further territorializing as to whether this is yours or whether somebody's else's mind is also in it, in you.

S: But when people have been talking about splitting from the one, was that referring back to the alaya?

TR: The alaya, yes.

S: Why not from the dharmakaya?

TR: We haven't got to that level yet. We are just talking about halfway through the path, the territory of samsara, which is very personal for us. If we were to talk about dharmakaya that would be fictional. We are talking about the level we can actually experience, or grasp.

THREE

Instinct and the Mandala Perspective

LET US CONTINUE by discussing the nature of the manifestation of emotional patterns that takes place in everyday life. There seems to be some conflict arising from the difference in the way those patterns exist and the way they manifest. We constantly have problems with that. Actually, there is no fundamental problem, but problems arise from the process of our reviewing what happens to us.

The way we exist is very plain and very simple. There is an influx of energies in the form of emotions and occasional flashes of ignorance and stupidity. And when a person is on the path of dharma, there are further occasional flashes of another kind of awareness that is sort of empty-hearted. This awareness takes place at the level where ego does not exist and where you cannot create further trips so as to entertain yourself with a sense of hopefulness. It is a kind of hopelessness that takes place.

As to what manifests, the way in which it manifests is very conditional. We receive some kind of a map, or pattern, some kind of data concerning how things work and how things happen. And at the same time, we try to interpret this. Between receiving the information and interpreting it, we tend to lose something. We tend constantly to exaggerate or miss something, so there is a big gap. Nevertheless, this is another form of truth. It is truth in its falsity, which is *some* kind of reality—we must admit that.

The end result of this whole process is that everything is extraordinarily complicated and detailed. And every bit of this is very meaningful to us. That seems to be the general pattern.

Though this process develops tremendous complexities, these nevertheless manifest in terms of certain forms or styles, all kinds of them. We cannot actually make systematic predictions as to exactly what is going to happen in this process and exactly how it will work; we cannot study the behavior patterns and put all the details down on an information sheet. But there are rough patterns. The only approach seems to be to try to the extent possible to perceive a generalized pattern without trying to interpret every detail.

We also have the distrustful quality of the judgment that goes on at the level of interpretation. The monitor, so to speak, or the commentator, has its tone of voice and its particular manner of expressing things, and its approach is extraordinarily distrustful.

One of the points in the traditional Buddhist way of viewing the question of what reality is or what truth is, is that in fact we cannot perceive reality, we cannot perceive truth. This is not to say that there is no reality or truth, but rather that whatever we perceive, if we happen to perceive anything, we see in accordance with some particular language or approach, and we color it with our own styles and ways of looking at things.

For instance, occasionally we have the experience of no ground, groundlessness, of no substance to our basic ego existence. But that groundlessness, that nonexistence, is not visible. Also, you cannot prove logically that such a thing as nonexistence exists and functions. Once you try to put the nonexistence of ego into systematic language or formulate it in any particular way in order to prove that that nonexistence does exist, this just becomes a greater [expression of] ego, a further way of proving some kind of existence, even though it is in the guise of nonexistence. So the process becomes very complicated and confusing.

Therefore, to realize the mandala perspective at all, we need some kind of aerial point of view, a way of seeing the whole thing totally and completely. In order to have that, we have to be willing to give up the details and the directions.

You might ask, What is left after we give up the details? Well, nothing very much, but at the same time quite a lot. But let us not even get into that question intellectually. It is a question of just doing it.

Understanding the mandala principle is not a matter of getting hold of a good-quality mandala, like the experts who appraise and buy and sell them. A mandala is something that is the product of nonthinking. At

the same time, it is a product of enormous feeling, or rather, instinct. The perspective of instinct without logic is the perspective for experiencing the mandala principle.

We come back here to the practice of meditation. Meditation is a man-made thing, naturally; otherwise, there would be no such thing as meditation. It is a man-made version of enlightenment. But at the same time a sense of great ordeal and great hassle is present in the practice of meditation. It is not an easy matter. It is much more difficult not to do anything and just sit than to do something. Yet strangely, from the practice of meditation comes some kind of state of being. We realize a state of being that is utterly hopeless and has no chance of survival. From the practice of meditation, a sense of hopelessness and no chance of survival begins to occur, and sometimes there is even a sense of regression. Then, at some point, we begin to find a kind of a loose end, some area that we haven't covered. That area that we haven't covered is an interesting area. It has the qualities of instinct.

Instinct cannot be overpowered by efficiency. It has to be ripened through a natural organic process. So to come to a realization of the mandala principle, a person must go through the artificiality of something like the technique of meditation. Doing that, a person also begins to go through a sense of disappointment. This tends to bring a lot of space and exaggerate the sense of organicness, of instinct. That is the working basis for beginning our study of mandala and the five buddha principles. It is very important for us to know that this study is very closely linked with practice and that it involves a lot of discipline.

Student: Is the mandala principle a process, or is it that you understand the mandala principle after you go through the artificial process of meditation and the disappointment and the coming to instinct?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The understanding of it is maybe a process. The product of the understanding is self-existent. It is like digging up a treasure from the ground. The treasure is there already. The digging process is an organic one; it involves work and labor. Then once you have dug the treasure up, it's there. From that point of view, the process is just temporary.

Student: I don't understand what a mandala is. I know it is not just the pictures in the books. Is it the imagery of that process you just described?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We have the symbolism of the mandala and we have the basic principle of the mandala. As a basic principle, mandala is that which is contained in everyday life. That includes the animate and the inanimate, form and the formless, emotion and non-emotion. Wherever there is relationship, there seems to be the mandala principle—wherever there is connection with any kind of reference point. I am not speaking of reference point at the conceptual level, but of reference point on the level of things as they are. For example, light and darkness are not influenced by concepts, particularly, but are a natural organic thing. Whenever there is this kind of reference point, there is mandala principle.

Mandala literally means "group," "society," "organization," that which is interlinked. It is like the notion of an accumulation of lots of single details, which, put together, make a whole. In the books, it is described as like a yak's tail. There are lots of single hairs that make up the tail, but what you see is a big bundle of hair, which constitutes a yak's tail. You cannot separate each hair out of it.

Student: You talked about giving up details and direction and having an aerial perspective. It seems to me that that might get tricky. One might get stuck in ignorance or some kind of zombie state.

Trungpa Rinpoche: The point here seems to be that if you are already at the ignorance level, you have nothing to give up, because you are not aware of the details in any case. Whereas if you do have something to give up, that is to say, if you have developed some kind of awareness of the existence of details, then you bypass or transcend it. This actually makes the details more real. The more you give up, the more they arise. And you cannot give it up just like that; it's not possible. Constant practice is needed.

S: Would that somehow be related to, in working with emotions, trying not to make use of them, but just letting them take you over. Or in dealing with panic, just letting it take you over. Would it mean not being concerned with this and that with regard to the emotions, not trying to do something with them or give them direction? Would that be like an aerial point of view in regard to the emotions?

TR: Yes, I suppose, to some extent. But letting them take you over here would not so much mean purely becoming subject to them. Then they would not be taking over but invading. That would be an inward

direction rather than an outward direction. On the other hand, if you suppress them, that would also be a process of rejecting. So I suppose it is a question of completely letting be. That way, the emotions can function freely, free from any burden whatsoever, from anywhere, physically and psychologically. Then they function in a way traditionally described as like a cloud arising in the sky and then dissolving. Letting be in this way is not exactly just doing nothing; it is also a way of experiencing the emotions. Unless you let them be as they are, you cannot experience them.

S: What one gives up is the tendency to do something with them?

TR: Yes, that's right. Once you begin to do something with them, there's no freedom. It is imprisonment—you are imprisoned by them.

Student: How does the freedom you just described relate to the freedom you were talking about before? You said that the way the five buddha principles relate to the basic ignorance is a kind of freedom, a freedom of being able to move around because of being totally with the ignorance. How does that relate to the freedom you were just describing of letting things be?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it's the same thing. Is there any problem?

S: I'm just somehow very confused. I'm trying to put things together and—

TR: Well, I wouldn't try to put things together too neatly.

Student: Could you explain a little further what you mean by "instinct"? Is it like what animals are considered to have—just doing the appropriate thing automatically? Or is it something else?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Instinct in this case is not purely a physical or biological effect that reflects onto the state of awareness or state of mind. Instinct here is an experience in which you feel that you are completely adequate, that you do not need the aid of conventional logic or any proof of anything. It is a sense of a firsthand account, firsthand experience, actually experiencing. At that point, you do not watch yourself experiencing, you simply just do experience. It is very straightforward. The closest traditional analogy, which a lot of people like the siddhas Saraha and Tilopa have used, is that of a mute man tasting sweetness, intense sweetness. It is delicious to taste. The mute has a real taste of this sweetness, he tastes it magnificently, but he can't describe it because he is

mute. Muteness here refers to the absence of intellectualizing, of describing the details and facets of this sweet taste. It is a total experience. This is quite different from animal instinct, which is driven by conditions or physical situations or relationship to physical situations. In this case, it is a firsthand account of things as they are.

Student: You were talking about the gap that occurs between the receiving of the data and the interpretation of it. You said that the interpretation was false but that there was a truth in that falsity. Could you say more about that? It is inevitable that that discrepancy will be there, isn't it? That discrepancy is there in every case, right?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes, definitely. It is not a question of trying to avoid that. Things do happen that way. That kind of gap is there. One has to develop a sort of overview of the whole thing. Then quite possibly there would be the tendency to not separate between the way things are and the way they manifest. Both become the same thing. That does not mean that that will free you from the second type of thing [the interpretation] happening. It will still happen in any case. But the idea is that some kind of trust begins to develop somewhere, trust that even though there is a gap, it doesn't matter.

S: Is that the same idea as what you were saying about overlooking the details, or rather taking an overall view of them? You said that to see the mandala, you would have to overlook the details and adopt an aerial perspective.

TR: Yes, that's it. Yes. Because if you begin to see the way it manifests, there are a lot of details in that.

Student: You used the phrase "empty-hearted awareness." Could you say more about what that is?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That is not supposed to be a metaphysical term. It is an experiential expression. It refers to a sense of the rug being pulled out from under your feet, along with a sense of nondwelling—not exactly a sense of floating, but of nondwelling. It's a stillness, not a pulsating, flickering kind of thing. It is as though you have suddenly been exploded and then you dissolve into the atmosphere, slowly. It is sort of an evaporation of something or other.

S: Is this an experience that we are all familiar with?

TR: I hope so. I think it is an experience that is very frequent. Maybe

we overlook it or regard it as just not important, but we tend to do that with everything.

Student: Is the gap between our intake of information and our analysis or understanding of it the gap in which we manifest our particular style in the mandala?

Trungpa Rinpoche: In the gap?

S: Yes.

TR: Not in the gap, but at the borderline where you begin building a bridge over the gap. It is that particular meeting point where you are approaching the gap, the neighborhood of the boundary itself rather than the gap. There is that, and after that there is the manifestation of the mandala.

S: Is meditation essential to becoming aware of how we build that bridge?

TR: Yes. I think meditation is actually the bridge itself. Definitely, yes.

Student: Is what you meant by distrust at the level of the watcher that the watcher clouds our perception of reality?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. It also gets the wrong information. Either it misses the point or exaggerates something.

S: And the watcher is also the beginning of the path, that which begins to allow us to see the confusion.

TR: Yes.

S: And then the trust that we develop is being willing to sit in the gap when the watcher isn't . . .

TR: Not necessarily. It is to see the futility of the watcher rather than to appreciate the gap. It is to see the activities of the watcher and how it works, how it functions.

Student: I remember your saying somewhere that emotions are not really different from thoughts, that they're a special kind of thought that we give a lot of prestige to, but now you seem to be implying that they are something distinct.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Emotions are sort of colors that exist in the thoughts, rather than being a special species, so to speak. They are the highlights of thoughts, which according to tradition have five colors—white, blue, yellow, red, and green. Traditionally, there are these five

types of emotions which are five types of exaggerated thoughts. But they have a particular energy.

Student: Rinpoche, you mentioned a feeling of a loss of ground and of regression. Times like those are times when you least have trust in your own intelligence to deal with the situation. Is regular meditation practice enough to deal with that, or is some other effort necessary?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We are speaking very generally. I think we need meditation as well as meditation-in-action in our everyday lives. Meditation-in-action provides a sense of solidity and sanity as well as willingness to enter into the encounter with life. And that in turn brings up the question of the gap and the neighborhood of energy where the mandala perspective is happening. So we need both. We can't say that sitting practice by itself is the only way. The two have to complement each other.

FOUR

Three Aspects of Perception

WE MIGHT ELABORATE FURTHER at this point on the idea of relating with the world. To begin with, there are some very tough questions regarding this, such as what is the world and whose world is it, and what does relating with it actually mean.

Basically, it seems to be nobody's world, since there is nobody, as such. The energy that is constantly taking place does not belong to anybody; it is a natural organic process. But on this basis, we function as though the world belongs to us. I function as if I have myself, as if I do exist.

Here the nonexistence of ego is not a philosophical matter, but simply a matter of perception. Perception is unable to trace back its existence [to an origin], so it becomes just sheer energy, without a beginner of the perception and without any substance. It is just simple perception.

Perception on that level has three aspects. The first is perception as experience. In this case, experience does not refer to the experience of self-confirmation, but to experience in the sense of things as they are. White is white, black is black, and so forth.

Then there is [the second aspect], the perception of emptiness, which is the absence of things as they are. Things have their room; things always come along with a certain sense of room, of space. Even though they may appear within the complexities of the overcrowdedness of experience, they provide their own space within the overcrowdedness. Actually, overcrowdedness and room are the same thing; overcrowdedness *is* room in some sense. This is because there is movement involved, because there

is dance and play involved. At the same time, there is a shifty and intangible quality, and because of that the whole thing is very lucid.

There is experience, then space or emptiness, and then the final aspect, which is called luminosity. Luminosity has nothing to do with bright visual light. It is a sense of sharp boundary and clarity. There is no theoretical or intellectual reference point for this, but in terms of ordinary experience, it is a sense of clarity, a sense of things being seen as they are, unmistakably.

So there are these three aspects of perception: the sense of experience, the sense of emptiness, and the sense of luminosity. The point is that with that level of perception [that contains the three aspects], one is able to see all the patterns of one's life. Whether the patterns of one's life are regarded as neurotic or enlightened, one is able to see them all clearly. That seems to be the beginning of some glimpse of the mandala perspective, the beginning of a glimpse of the five buddha energies.

In other words, the five types of energies are not confined to the level of the enlightened state alone. They are also contained in the confused level. The point is to see them as they are—thoroughly confused, thoroughly neurotic, and thoroughly painful; or extraordinarily pleasurable, extraordinarily expansive, joyous, and humorous—whatever. So we are not trying to remove what we perceive; we are not trying to reshape the world according to how we would like to see it. We are seeing the world as it is without reshaping. Whatever comes along in us is part of the buddha principles and part of the mandala setup.

I would like to remind you once again that the approach we are taking here is purely an experiential approach. We are not talking about things from a philosophical point of view, discussing whether such-and-such a thing exists or not; we are not trying to see how this fits into a conceptual framework of phenomenological experience. We are not talking about those things.

Actually, in many cases the philosophers have gone wrong by trying to find out the truth of the matter concerning the way things are, rather than relating with things in terms of perception. As a result, they find themselves completely theorizing the whole thing without knowing what actual experience we might have of things as they are. If we theorize about the existence of the world, its solidity, its eternality, and so on, we block a very large chunk of our own experience, because we are trying too much to prove or establish the foundations [of our philosophi-

cal view]. So much so, that we end up concerned with the foundations [of our view] rather than its relationship to the earth. That even seems to be the wrong approach to metaphysics. We are speaking on the experiential level about what we experience in our everyday life situation, which does not have to be confirmed by theory or proved. It does not depend on anything of that nature. It is simply a matter of everyday experience from minute to minute. It does not involve any long-term projects.

The question of perception becomes very important here, because perception cannot be packed down to form a solid foundation. Perceptions shift and float very much with the experience of life. You might say, "I saw a beautiful formation of clouds over the Himalayas." That does not mean to say that those clouds will always be there. Even though such cloud formations may be among the attributes of looking at the Himalayas, you would not expect necessarily always to see a beautiful cloud formation when you get to the Himalayas. You might arrive in the middle of the night or when the sky is completely clear.

When you describe your experience to somebody else, whatever you perceived at a particular moment may sound extremely full and vivid and fantastic, because somehow you have managed to convey the experience of that moment. But if you try to recapture that experience and mimic the whole thing all over again, that is quite impossible. Quite possibly, you might end up philosophizing about it and getting further and further away from reality, so to speak, whatever that is.

There is a sharp precision that exists in our life, which generally arises from some form of training and discipline, particularly the sitting practice of meditation. Not that the sitting practice of meditation sharpens our perception, but sitting practice makes it possible for us to perceive sharply. It is a question of removing the clouds rather than of recreating the sun. That seems to be the whole point.

There is some faint experience of reality—it seems to be very faint and uncertain. But however faint it may be, it is still very sharp and precise and tends to bring a lot of clarity also. On the whole, this kind of perception we are talking about depends on a certain kind of watchfulness. This watchfulness is not particularly being careful or tiptoeing. This watchfulness is experiencing a sudden glimpse—of whatever—without any qualifications: just the sudden glimpse itself.

This point has led to problems and is regarded as enigmatic. If we

say, "You should see a sudden glimpse," people usually ask, "of what?" And if we do not have anything to say about what it is, then the whole thing is regarded as absurd. But if we could change our thinking style entirely, if we could open our mind to something slightly more than what we have already been told, then we could step beyond the level where everything is purely based on the idea of a business transaction and a profit-making process. There are possibilities of awareness without any conditions, conditions in this case being the sense that you might be able to get something out of it, the sense that you are going to be able to see certain particular things with this awareness. It is just simple straightforward awareness of itself—awareness being aware without anything being put in it. That kind of perception seems to be the only key point. It is the key perspective, the microscope that makes it possible to perceive the three types of perception we discussed.

On that level, [perceiving] the spectrum of the mandala of the five buddha principles is no big deal. Those principles are not an extraordinary thing to perceive. Perceiving them is quite matter-of-fact. The basic mandala principle becomes very simple. It is just simply that everything is related with everything else. It is quite simple and straightforward.

Student: Could you say something more about perception as experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Maybe you could try to say something about it. Just try guesswork.

S: Is it perception of your subjective experience as it's going on, even though you admit that it's subjective?

TR: Getting close, yes. But there is something else that is needed for that.

S: To be experiencing things.

TR: Yes, but when you're experiencing something, what comes with it?

S: Reactions? Your own reactions?

TR: Yes, but what is that reaction called?

S: Experience?

TR: No, there's something else.

S: Emotions?

TR: You're getting close.

S: Thoughts? Perceptions?

TR: Not necessarily.

S: Responses?

TR: The driving force of responses, yes.

S: So it's . . .

TR: It's energy. You see, there is a kind of exuberant energy that goes with perception and experience. When you experience something, you actually recapture what you experience. For example, when you say, "I have seen a piece of shit," it is very vivid and real, and you catch that energy. Or, "I have seen the naked sun." There is a lot of energy behind that. You actually experience it as though you are it. You almost become indivisible from something at the moment when you experience it. It is that kind of direct communication without anything in between.

S: So it's really throwing yourself in totally.

TR: It doesn't require throwing, particularly. It is realized on the spot.

Student: The clarity that you speak of, is that always related to a sense of spaciousness?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think so, yes. Otherwise there's no sharpness. If there were no space, it would be unfocused.

S: Do we all start as luminous beings and then forget our luminosity?

TR: Luminous beings? Sounds like Don Juan.

S: Do we start as luminous and forget our luminosity?

TR: It is not a question of starting as luminous—we are. Even while uncertainties are taking place, we *are* still. What we are talking about is just a way of looking again and focusing on it. It is not a matter of a case history, particularly; it's an ongoing thing. Right at this moment, we are luminous and we are empty and we are perceptive at the same time.

Student: I believe you said earlier that when you perceive something, something is either lost or exaggerated. Is it through the interpretation of the perception that this happens?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes.

S: It's not the perception itself that creates the exaggeration?

TR: [It happens] once you begin to conceptualize, once you begin to elaborate on it.

S: But just the perception itself is still very accurate. So are perception and experience equal in that sense?

TR: Perception is experience if you are *there.* But perception cannot be experience if you are not there.

S: If you include yourself in the perception.

TR: There's no self to include.

S: Is the sense that we have of a self perceiving, itself a perception? I'm talking about the sense of selfhood that I experience in confronting reality, as if I'm a corporation that has to deal with what's around me. Is that a perception?

TR: No, because that needs second thoughts to confirm it. The actual perception is the first thought.

S: How do we know if we can trust our perceptions?

TR: If you know that there's no "we" as such, then it seems to go very smoothly.

S: Well, how do I know if I can trust my perceptions?

TR: You can reword it any way you want; it's still the same thing.

S: Well, how can you tell the difference between perception and projection?

TR: In the case of a projection, you're waiting for something to bounce back and confirm your existence. Perception is just sort of an antenna that exists.

S: It seems you are saying that the confusion, or distortion, of perceptions arises from the perceiver wanting to do something with the perception, wanting to act somehow on what he or she is perceiving. Does the primitive confusion you spoke of at the beginning arise from the same source?

TR: That is what we are talking about, yes. When we talk about it as ego or self, we are talking about that primordial one, that primeval state of thisness, or solid fixation. So, yes, we are talking about that.

S: You've talked about this primordial sense of thisness as some sort of nonconceptual reference point and have said that the mandala principle exists whenever there is a reference point. Is this sense of thisness the same type of reference point from which the mandala principle or perspective springs?

TR: It gets a little complicated in that area. There is a twist there, which is that when there is a reference point, that is a kind of primitive belief; then you realize that there is actually no one to react to that reference point, and that brings you to a different or higher level altogether. Both levels are active ingredients in the realization of the mandala princi-

ple. But [we have to be clear that] we are talking about two levels at the same time: the primitive or primordial ego and the realization of the nonexistence of the reactor to that.

S: Not solidifying that . . .

TR: Yes, not solidifying that solidification, so to speak.

S: You say that with that level of perception, the mandala principle is a simple sense of connections?

TR: Yes.

S: And you've spoken before about trusting the karmic reality of cause and effect. Is that related to the sense of connection?

TR: Yes, because that is the ultimate karmic cause and effect, that of no action. It is the highest form of karma, akarma, non-karma.

S: Are the connections of the mandala principle in this non-karma?

TR: Fundamentally, although as far as the expressions are concerned, there may be various styles. But those expressions are based on certain fundamentals that make it possible for the mandala principle to come and go and manifest itself in different fashions.

Student: You talked about recounting an experience, a real perception, without losing the energy of it. It seems to me that that is what underlies a work of art. It's the ability to hold on to the energy even though the experience is in the past—a kind of working that is not ego-based but is very positive. Does that seem like a possible interpretation?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think the point here is that you can work on both levels at once: the level of the ego-based world with its energies, emotions, and so on; and the non-ego-based level. There is no conflict between the two, for the very fact that they are organically linked somehow. The non-ego-based level is more refined. The ego-based level is a crude form of that.

S: So you don't try to cut them off from each other and keep one and throw the other out.

TR: No, not at all. It's very natural from that point of view.

S: It sounds to me like perception of experience, perception of emptiness, and perception of luminosity are successively deeper layers of the same thing. Is that the case?

TR: I think you see all three of them at once, but with different accents on them, depending on the mood of the reality of the time.

S: You've spoken about the gap before. We've discussed and thought

about it a lot, and I'm still confused. I previously thought you meant that the gap was that time when you are directly experiencing something. You are not interpreting or laying anything on the experience; you are just right there, so there is a gap in your normal sense of awareness, because your normal sense of awareness is based on the continuity of interpretations and commentaries. But when you talked about the gap earlier on here, you talked about it as that space that is between your direct experience and your interpretation in which you lose or exaggerate something. I was wondering if perhaps you could clarify that.

TR: I think we are talking about two different ways of looking at things. There is a contrast here between the mahayana teaching of shunyata, which is a gap; and the tantric view of gap, or the mandala principle. Those two are slightly different. According to the tantric teachings, the realization takes place in the moment when the boundary occurs, because you are working with the energy rather than purely working with the absence of something. You are not trying to see everything as empty as such, but you are trying to see everything as transmutable energy. And the transformation takes place at just that point when you reach the boundary.

S: Just when you reach the boundary of what?

TR: The gap is just a shift between two reference points. In this case, the gap is not particularly a big deal, like the shunyata experience. It's just a gap with a small *g*. It's a shift, a change. There's just a journey and you reach halfway between this and that, which is not particularly a shunyata type of experience. I wouldn't say that the gap has the quality of emptiness. It is just going away from somewhere and arriving at some other situation. If you combine this with the mahayana's experience of shunyata, then the experience of shunyata is included in the boundary. According to the vajrayana, the shunyata experience is actually in the boundary rather than particularly in the gap.

[Even in the mahayana,] the shunyata symbolism is that of a mother who gives birth. It is connected with the mother principle, the creator. So the idea here is that the creator is the boundary—the shunyata experience gives birth to the boundary. Here the gap has more energy in it than the Mahayana version of just shunyata, emptiness alone. Here shunyata is something to play with. Finally, shunyata finds a playmate, a lover, and therefore becomes more dynamic than the straight version, the straight, simple mahayana version where everything is transcended.

S: It seems, then, that the Mahayana shunyata is an incomplete perception, something unreal created by the practitioner. If shunyata is really in the boundary where there's lots of energy, the mahayana shunyata would be just a man-made thing.

TR: You can't say that exactly. If you are in it, you feel very complete. This approach contains a reference to further realities, so to speak. The very fact that more emphasis is put on transcendence creates a sense of still overcoming, still going beyond. Whereas in the vajrayana, going beyond is not important; the boundary, or the ridge, itself is important, rather than going beyond it. So it's not getting inside the room from outside that is important; it's not a question of climbing over the doorstep to get inside. It's the doorstep itself that is important in the vajrayana. The boundary itself is very important, and it does not refer to transcending anything, particularly. It is regarded as energy rather than as an obstacle.

S: Why do we need the mahayana conception of shunyata? Why don't we just try dealing with the boundary from the beginning?

TR: The boundary is regarded as an obstacle from the mahayana point of view. In the mahayana, you can only overcome the notion of the boundary by using the experiential logic that the inside of the boundary is the same as the outside of the boundary and that therefore there is no boundary—rather than regarding the boundary itself as a great thing.

S: So is it necessary to go through the mahayana version of shunyata before indulging in—

TR: The interesting point is that, although we may be talking about the vajrayana version of shunyata on the linguistic level, we might still be perceiving in a purely mahayana fashion. You can't just suddenly make a policy change. It depends on the level of one's growth.

Student: Earlier you said that meditation is a bridge over the gap. If the gap is important, why would you want to bridge it?

Trungpa Rinpoche: To make the whole thing into a big boundary rather than having a gap.

S: With the bridge the gap itself becomes obsolete?

TR: The bridge is the boundary, so you have a very thick boundary, rather than there being a gap and then you come to a no-man's-land and then to somebody else's land. That's the way it happens in Texas anyway.

S: I am confused, because when you were talking about the mahayana symbolism of shunyata, you seemed to say both that the mother, or the creator, is the boundary and that she gives birth to the boundary.

TR: Well, if you are relating to that, you are the boundary maker as well as the boundary itself.

S: Oh, I see. The tantrics by not making that differentiation—

TR: That's right.

FIVE

A Glimpse of the Five Buddha Families

HAVING DISCUSSED THE three aspects of perception, we could perhaps go on to a more elaborate level of experience than that discussed in connection with them. Perceptions are a kind of kindling wood that brings us to a certain state of awareness of experience, which then becomes the experience of what is known as *isness*. This is a particular term that has been developed as part of the Buddhist vocabulary. I have not seen it used in this way anywhere else. In terms of actual experience, starting with perception, isness is the experience of things as they are, but not only that: that experience also confirms itself by itself. So we see things as they are—or maybe I should say, as they is—and then isness comes from seeing it as it is and tasting it.

In tantric language, this particular taste is known as *one taste* or *one flavor*. When we talk about one flavor, we do not mean abandoning everything but one particular situation and developing an allegiance to that particular one thing among many. It has nothing to do with there being a lack of many and therefore we happen to end up with one. It has nothing to do with making a choice or rejecting something else. In fact, it is the opposite: because there are no rejections, it is possible to stick with that one, which means all.

We have already talked about [the way in which] all and one could be similar. When we talk about many, generally it means covering many areas, accumulating a lot of stuff, a lot of pieces of information. But when we talk about all, that automatically means covering a large

portion of the atmosphere of a situation. In this case, we are talking about a greater-area atmosphere, which is a state of experience of the world of reality.

[Ordinarily,] reality can be qualified by giving it various functions. But in this case, there is no function, there are no qualifications. All we can speak of here is nakedness, unclothedness. It is experience that is free from the clothing of conventionality, free from the clothing of relative truth. It is also free from all the other things that come from that—ego-orientation, orientation toward security, and orientation toward eternity.

Eternity here is the sense that one's life can last forever. We hope that any kind of spiritual experience we might be able to have will make it worth living longer and might also help us to live longer. We hope that we will be able to live longer and longer and longer, that we will be able to survive eternally without having to face the truth of death. But this is a kind of simple-minded approach that I do not think is worth discussing at this point.

Beyond the level of that primitive approach, there is a sense of experiencing reality in its true nakedness—but not for any particular purpose. The conventional question at this point is, "Having discovered this, what am I going to get out of it? What is going to happen to me?" But the truth of the matter seems to be, nothing is going to happen to you. That's it. There is nothing more. If I have disappointed you, I'm sorry, but we cannot do anything about it. That's things as they are, or things "as it hangs."

So we make successive attempts to get to unqualified experience, realization without any tail attached to it, without any confirmation or promises attached to it. And then we might begin to accept things as they are in a really simple, ordinary way; we will probably be able to perceive some glimpse of reality without conditions. At that point, we might say that we are experiencing the five types of buddha intelligence.

I am sure you have already heard and read a great deal about the five buddha families.

The five types of buddha principles are not a Buddhist version of astrology. They have nothing to do with fortune-telling or finding the strength of the head line in your palm. They are more a guideline to experience in relation to those reference points—or rather, non-refer-

ence points—that we have been discussing. They are connected with a realization of phenomena in the complete sense.

We know that everybody has their particular innate style and approach based on the five buddha qualities. For that matter, this is at the same time a person's particular buddha potential in terms of emotions and confusions. But there is also another way of looking at the whole process [related to the five buddha principles]. It is a question of depth and of expansiveness from the depth, which [two factors] can also be seen as simultaneous. In this approach, there is no allegiance to a certain particular buddha principle that you cherish as your one and only style. That [kind of partial] view would tend to give us a two-dimensional experience of the buddha principles. In order to see the whole thing in terms of a three-dimensional experience, we have to approach it from depth to expansion, or concentration to expansion.

In relating to our state of being or experience at the level of transcending concepts, we can regard the five principles as various depths, various levels of depth. These are also various degrees of heaviness, or weight. If something is floating in water, part of it is going to be most prominent. Part of it is going to be floating closest to the surface, and part of it is going to be at the greatest depth in the ocean. That depends on the heaviness or lightness of the substance. In this case, it is the same approach. And from that point of view, whenever we function, we function with all five principles at once. We cannot deny this, despite our particular [predominant] characteristic that might exist.

This brings a different perspective on one-pointedness—a vertical rather than a horizontal one. You start with the buddha-family buddha principle, which is the heaviest of all. It is the most solid material, that which clings to ego or relates to a sense of all-pervasive spaciousness, the wisdom of all-pervasive space. This is the core of the matter, the core of the whole thing. It is that which brings a sense of solidity and a sense of basic being, a sense of openness and a sense of wisdom and sanity at the same time. That is the buddha buddha family, which is correlated with the skandha of form, which is the most basic.[1]

From there, you begin to move out slowly to the experience of feeling. This derives from the solidity of the awakened state of mind and brings a sense of expansiveness, intelligent expansiveness, like tentacles or antennae of all kinds. You begin to relate with areas of relationship

very clearly and fully and thoroughly. This is related with the ratna buddha family.

The next one is impulse, which is connected with the padma family, because of its sharpness and quickness, and at the same time the willingness to seduce the world outside into your reference point, into relationship with you. Even in the awakened state of this principle, there is a willingness to communicate, to relate. This padma-family principle is much lighter than the previous two.

The fourth one is concept, which is connected with the karma family. This principle happens very actively and very efficiently. Any activity or efficiency that takes place in your state of being is related with the karma-family process.

We are rising out of the depths of the ocean. As we float we are slowly approaching the surface.

The fifth one is consciousness, which is the vajra family. Here there is a type of intelligence and intellect that operates with very minute precision and clarity, so the whole thing becomes extraordinarily workable. Once you are on the surface, you know how to relate with the phenomenal world and you know what the working basis of the phenomenal world is. In terms of the activity of a buddha, there are always skillful means for relating appropriately with the reference points of perceivers of the teaching. A buddha will know how to treat students, how to speak in their own terms, their own language, and relate in terms of their own style in a very sharp, penetrating, and precise fashion.

So the five skandhas are part of our basic makeup, of our being, both from the samsaric and nirvanic points of view. Therefore, we are constantly manifesting the five types of buddha nature within ourselves directly and precisely with a certain amount of style. It is very important to realize that, because of that, the five types of energy are completely available to us and workable. We can relate with them very precisely, and there are no particular problems attached to that.

Everything seems to be a matter of stepping out from depth to openness, concentration to openness. The five stages of the skandhas are always part of our basic makeup, part of our basic style. We actually operate from those grounds, from those basic styles constantly, all the time. We have a reference point, whether as part of a meditative state or a confused one. We start from that basic reference point and begin to expand toward the workabilities of reality, depending on whatever

challenges or promises come up for us. That is the general pattern that is all-pervasive and prominent.

Student: In the first lecture, you talked about the basic BLAH, or the alaya. The "thisness" of it seems to be related to the first skandha and the buddha family. Is there some close connection?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The buddha buddha family as we are talking about it is beyond all, beyond alaya and beyond what might be known as nirvana. Of course, there is a reference point connected with it, just as our life is partly connected with the night and partly connected with the day.

S: Is the buddha family one taste? Is that why it's the heaviest—because it's reaching the sense of "isness"?

TR: That's right. It's one taste.

S: And from there, it is a process of expansion?

TR: Yes. It is one taste not in the sense of a monotone, but in the sense of—

S: Yes, that's exactly why it expands.

TR: Yes, yes. That's right.

Student: Rinpoche, tonight you seemed to talk a lot about acceptance, about isness and accepting things as they are. I remember once hearing you say that life was like a straight drink without any watering down, and I wonder if the Buddhist path amounts to ever greater degrees of being able to accept what is. It seems almost like going to a horror movie where you keep wanting to run out because of the phenomena that you see. Is it just a matter of getting used to what you see so you don't need to run out?

Trungpa Rinpoche: "Getting used to it" meaning what?

S: Getting used to your insight.

TR: Well, if you go to a horror movie, you usually don't want to run out, because you want to get your money's worth. It's partially entertaining even though you might detest the whole thing. We usually stick with it unless we are cowardly or sleepy or sick or something. Usually people with any sense of fun or sense of ironic vigor will stay and watch and try to finish the whole thing. The point is, one taste is like a straight drink, obviously. But at the same time, it's not so much a matter of acceptance or yielding as such. I think the whole thing boils down to understanding that you can't actually dictate [what happens], you can't

change your phenomena, not because you finally find it hopeless and give up trying, but because relating to the phenomenal world becomes very straightforward and direct.

S: Is that because of the egolessness that is derived from being able to perceive the world?

TR: I think so, yes. It is like nobody, really at the bottom of their heart, complains that there is day and night. Accepting that transcends giving up, because it is already such a daily occurrence.

Student: In *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism,* you describe the five buddha families as in the center and in the east, south, west, and north. Your description just now was much more like concentric circles, and the families seemed much more one with each other than here and there. It doesn't seem like the same thing.

Trungpa Rinpoche: This approach is not exactly the same, but it arrives at the same principle. It's like a tree. You study the roots underground, and then above the ground you have the trunk, then slowly you get to the top and you study the branches and fruit and blossoms and all the kinds of leaves. It's that kind of approach, rather than having everything divided into quarters or provinces.

Student: It sounds like the buddha buddha family has more depth to it. You said it was weightier. And then as you talked about the buddha families, the vajra family sounded more surfacy, as though there's less to it, less quality to it.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Yes. The vajra is more expansive, and the buddha is very deep, concentrated.

S: Is that like with the five skandhas: you start with the grain of sand and by the time you reach the fifth skandha, it's a total deterioration? And here, by the time you get to the vajra family, it's like a deterioration from the buddha family, which has more depth to it?[2]

TR: From the samsaric point of view, that is the case, I think. But you can't completely rely on that outlook, because you would be trying to regroup yourself every minute. There is a constant expanding and contracting, expanding and contracting—the game goes on all the time.

SIX

Sambhogakaya Buddha

THERE ARE TWO BASIC POINTS I would like to touch on by way of conclusion. Those two points are the state of awareness that comes through sitting meditation and the sense of appreciation that goes with it. That awareness is able to perceive the workings of the phenomenal world as the five buddha principles and the mandala setup, and the appreciation brings an understanding of the magical aspect of that.

This awareness is the unconditional awareness that we have discussed already. It is awareness without purpose or goal, without aim. From that awareness, a state of fearlessness arises, and through that fearlessness, the workings of phenomena become self-existing magic. In this case, magic is not conjuring up demons or playing tricks. It is magic in the sense that the phenomenal world possesses a sense of enormous health and strength—wholesomeness. From that sense of strength and wholesomeness, a person is able to nourish himself. And a person is also able to contribute further nourishment to the phemonenal world at the same time. So it is not a one-way journey but a two-way exchange.

That exchange of nourishment, which is basic sanity, and the sense of fearlessness bring the state of awareness back. So a constant circle of exchange takes place. And it becomes enjoyable. It is not that one enters into a state of euphoria or anything like that, but still, it is basically enjoyable, because the sharp edges, which are doubt and uncertainty, begin to dissolve. This brings an almost supernatural quality, an unexpected excitement. One is able to mold such a world into a pattern, not from the point of view of desire and attachment and anxiety, but from the point of view of life and fearlessness of death.

The whole thing takes place, as we said earlier, on the basis of empty-heartedness. You don't exist and the energy doesn't exist and the phenomenal world doesn't exist, therefore everything *does* exist. And there is an enormous magical quality about that. It is completely lucid, but at the same time tangible in some sense, because there is texture and the absence of texture. There is a sense of journey and a sense of discrimination, and there is a sense of passion and aggression and everything. But it seems that everything operates on the level of no-ground, which makes the whole operation ideal, so to speak.

The traditional term that applies here is *sambhogakaya buddha.* The sambhogakaya buddha is a manifestation of energy that operates on the level of joy, enjoyment. We could say in some sense that it is the level of transcendental indulgence. This makes life continuous, but not eternal like a brick wall that has been extended from one end of the world to the other. It would not be as solid as that. There would be continuity like that of a flowing brook. The discontinuity becomes continuity and the flow sort of dances as it goes along.

So that is the basic way to view the mandala and the five buddha principles. It is a positive world, not in the sense of a simple-minded love-and-light approach, but in the sense that the world is workable. One can relate with such a world, because everything is visible and very vivid. That dispels hesitation and fear, and you can remold things. You can reshape the clouds and ride on the rainbow. Impossibilities can be achieved by not achieving.

The point is not so much that in reaching such a point we have made progress or made a switch from something else. Rather, it is that we have made the discovery that such experience does exist, such a setup exists all the time. Therefore, it is matter of discovery rather than progress.

Student: What you were saying about the tantrikas making the whole thing boundary and also the tantric idea of continuity or indestructible energy that is always there—those things seem to me to undermine the basic Buddhist idea of impermanence and rising and falling. Is there some change of perception there that goes further than the rising and falling?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, at the beginning, at the hinayana level, you become homeless, anagarika. You give up your home, you give up your

possessions, power, wealth, and so on. You renounce everything. Naropa even gave up his intellect. Then in tantric practice, the tantrikas repossess what has been given up in an entirely different way. Homelessness becomes being a householder and giving up power becomes the acquisition of greater power. From that point of view, giving up or transcending the flow and setting one's boundary at discriminating awareness is another kind of freedom, but freedom with guts, so to speak. We are more involved with realities, rather than purely dwelling on motivation alone, which seems to be the approach of the earlier yanas. In the earlier yanas your motivation is more important than what you actually experience; and what you experience is often looked upon as something fishy or untrustworthy. One is constantly coming back, pulling oneself back to the motivation and working to purify from that angle. But in tantra, there is a further twist. From the tantric point of view, motivation is just a concept, just a shadow, and what you actually experience apart from the motivation becomes more important. So it is a different twist, repossessing the same thing in a more daring way. And somehow the boundaries seem to be necessary. In order to extend your boundary, you have to have a boundary.

Student: I am trying to understand what one flavor is about. You say that nothing is permanent but impermanence, and nothing is continuous but discontinuity. Now that might tend to give a nihilistic feeling that there is just nothing at all that has any qualities that are retained. But is the point of one flavor that actually relativity has a quality that you get to know or that discontinuity has a certain style or feeling that is always there?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Definitely. In order to be discontinuous, you have to have the strength to be one. Yes.

S: So discontinuity has a personality in a sense, or a feeling.

TR: Yes, there is definitely a texture—

S: —that's always there. That's the one flavor?

TR: Yes. That is why the nonexistence spheres, or realms, such as vajradhatu and dharmadhatu can be defined. They have a name and they have an experience. They are levels that are tangible in some sense. The idea of the analogy of holding a vajra is that the shunyata experience can be handled.

Student: In your description of experience earlier, it sounded as though things get clearer and sharper the more one is able to perceive unconditional reality, and then everything is a sort of luminosity. Things become very clear, and at that point the sharp edges begin to dissolve. Is that a perceptual experience?

Trungpa Rinpoche: The idea of luminosity is not so much a matter of seeing a great contrast in the sense of the more you see light, the more darkness you see. That approach still has a sense of there being mysterious corners there. What we are saying is that at this point there are no sharp edges anymore. There is no more division. Everything is without a shadow.

S: What happened to the alaya experience that you started out this whole series of talks with? What is happening with that at the level you are talking about now?

TR: I think that disappeared somewhere along the way. The situation seems to be that there is something to begin with, but there's nothing to end up with.

Student: In an earlier seminar, you said that art is giving a hint of an experience rather than laying out the whole thing. I have the feeling that what you have been doing here is just giving a hint. You don't want to give us too much—the whole thing is so condensed! Is there something in that?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think that is the only way. It seems that descriptions wouldn't be complete. Even if you described everything in great detail, it would still just be a finger painting.

Student: Could you say something more about what you meant by reshaping, or remolding?

Trungpa Rinpoche: We are talking about a different kind of reshaping. It is not reshaping in accordance with a model based on the reference point of ego, or "this." In this case, reshaping is exchange. Whenever there is more exchange between this and that and that and this, then you can control the momentum, because there is no one who is controlling. There is no particular aim and object involved, therefore you can steer the energy flow in certain particular directions. The idea of shape here is a matter of direction rather than something based on a particular model.

S: What would be the basis of that directing then?

TR: Itself. The directions themselves. There's no director, rather the direction is its own self-existing energy.

Student: You said that the alaya goes away at some point. In the beginning of the seminar, you said that samsara and nirvana have the same relationship to the alaya, that it was the background for both of them. What do you mean by the alaya being the background for nirvana as well as samsara?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think it's the same thing. They both began at the same time.

S: That seems to make nirvana just another version of samsara.

TR: Well, sure. If there were no samsara, then there couldn't be any nirvana, and vice versa.

S: Well, when you talk about awakening and coming to this state of empty-heartedness, is there any nirvana at that point?

TR: Well, when we talk about empty-heartedness, we are not saying that the heart is hollow. We are talking about a nonexistent heart. So I don't think any definition is possible. There's no reference point at that level; there's no reference point there.

S: Well, the reason I asked you the question is because I suspected that the word *nirvana* meant something different from *bodhi,* or enlightenment. But from your answer, it seems that you're saying that at that point the whole idea of path and there being awake and asleep no longer makes any sense, because there's no reference point.

TR: Yes. So be it.

S: Then I still have this question: there is some sense of working back toward alaya, as if there's going to be a more direct experience of the ground of confusion, and that is described as a more immediate experience of ego, if I understand correctly. So you don't talk at that point about a more immediate experience of non-ego?

TR: No.

S: So it seems that the whole thing is completely ego, starting with the alaya and going through the whole five skandhas and eight consciousnesses. So from the alaya all the way up to nirvana is completely ego.

TR: Yes. Because of that, there is still a reference point.

S: So to put it vulgarly, nirvana is a trip.

TR: Sure. That's not a new discovery. I think that's putting it very politely.

Student: I think I read some place that you said that karma and ratna are more stable than padma and vajra, that somehow too much vajra becomes karma and too much padma becomes ratna, and too much ratna becomes buddha. There was an impression that somehow padna and vajra are more intangible than karma and ratna. I wonder if it would be helpful to get into that a little bit.

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you said it.

S: Well, why would karma and ratna be more solid than vajra? Why are vajra and padma more intangible?

TR: I think if you look at the descriptions we gave in the previous talk, you will see that vajra is the final blossom—consciousness—and ratna is one of the first. It is at the beginning level—feeling. It is at the level of being earthbound. I think they [the buddha principles] are necessary prerequisites for each other; they are necessary for each other. You cannot have a tree without a trunk, and you also cannot have a tree without leaves. All of them are necessary. But when the wind blows, the leaves of the tree move first, then the trunk. But you could say that the trunk of the tree is also moved by the wind, through the gesture of the leaves. And for that matter, you could also say that the whole earth shakes. It's a relative situation.

S: In any given situation, is there a particular way in which the energies present themselves? Or are they always just there and when we look we see them?

TR: They present themselves in an appropriate manner, yes, naturally. They react in accordance with the energies that are there. It is very much like elements reacting.

Student: Would you say something about the relationship between the five buddha families and the six realms?

Trungpa Rinpoche: That would require another seminar. Let's save it for next time.

Student: I sometimes hear the ratna family referred to in terms of pride. Is this being proud of your own ignorance and stupidity? Is it a stubborn quality, whereby you can see yourself doing this, but you're so

proud of who you are or the way you relate with the world that you actually compliment your own ignorance?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I think you could say that, definitely. The point is that when you create a world of your own, you begin to be very proud of your extension, your offshoot, and that tends to feed you back. And at the same time, there is a slight hesitation and embarrassment. You try to avoid looking at the root of the projection, of that offshoot, and the way to cover it up is further arrogance.

Student: Could you equate the alaya with the gap?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It is a somewhat manufactured gap.

S: So the alaya is manufactured then? Is this the alaya that is after the split of duality, this and that?

TR: It is the sympathetic environment for the split.

S: So the alaya is like an ego version of the dharmakaya.

TR: Something like that. In fact, it could be an ego version of vajradhatu.

Student: Rinpoche, if there is nothing to begin with and nothing to end with, what is happening in between?

Trungpa Rinpoche: Well, it works a little differently than that. It seems there is something to begin with and there is nothing to end with, so I suppose in between, there is the dissipation of something into nothing, which is called "the path."

Student: In our discussion group, we were discussing a possible correlation between your vertical description of the buddha families and the breathing during sitting practice. There is the most solid basic factor, which is the sitting posture, and that would be correlated with the buddha family. And the gradual movement toward dissolution into space with the breath would correlate with the vajra family. Is that so? Is there that kind of macrocosm-microcosm relationship between sitting practice and what are you presenting?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I hope so.

S: In the previous talk, you talked about the movement from the depths of the ocean toward the surface, from which point the phenomenal world is best observed. That's the vajra family. But it seems to me

that one is most in touch in the buddha family and that it would be from that position that things would be best observed.

TR: That's the root, and it is a question of how much the root can experience the branches. So if there is an intelligent root, then it ceases to be a root, because it begins to be busy being intelligent and is unable to hold on to its earthiness.

Notes

Part One

Chapter 1. Orderly Chaos

1. Samsara is the round of birth and death and rebirth, characterized by suffering, impermanence, and ignorance. Nirvana is the extinguishing of the causes for samsaric existence—enlightenment.

2. These are the twelve nidanas, the causal links that perpetuate karmic existence. They are conventionally enumerated: ignorance (Sanskrit *avidya,* Tibetan *ma rikpa*), impulsive accumulation (Skt. *samskara,* Tib. *duje*), consciousness (Skt. *vijnana,* Tib. *nampar shepa*), name and form (Skt. *nama-rupa,* Tib. *ming dang suk*), sensation or sense consciousness (Skt. *shad-ayatana,* Tib. *kyeche druk*), contact (Skt. *sparsha,* Tib. *rekpa*), feeling (Skt. *vedana,* Tib. *tsorwa*), craving (Skt. *trishna,* Tib. *sepa*), grasping (Skt. *upadana,* Tib. *nyewar lenpa*), becoming (Skt. *bhava,* Tib. *sipa*), birth (Skt. *jati,* Tib. *kyewa*), and old age and death (Skt. *jara-marana,* Tib. *gashi*).

3. A mandala is usually represented by a diagram with a central deity, a personification of the basic sanity of buddha nature. The constructed form of a mandala has as its basic structure a palace with a center and four gates in the cardinal directions.

4. Kriyayoga emphasizes purity and the understanding that all phenomena are inherently pure, naturally sacred, and beyond fixation.

5. Madhyamaka is a mahayana school that emphasizes the doctrine of shunyata. This doctrine stresses that all conceptual frameworks are empty of any "reality."

6. A bodhisattva is one who has committed himself to the mahayana path of compassion and the practice of the six paramitas: generosity (Skt. *dana,*

Tib. *jinpa*), discipline (Skt. *shila*, Tib. *tsültrim*), patience (Skt. *kshanti*, Tib. *sopa*), exertion (Skt. *virya*, Tib. *tsöndrü*), meditation (Skt. *dhyana*, Tib. *samten*), and knowledge (Skt. *prajna*, Tib. *sherab*). Taking the responsibility of a bodhisattva begins with taking a vow, in the presence of one's teacher, to relinquish—or to attain—one's personal enlightenment in order to work for all sentient beings.

Chapter 5. The Lubrication of Samsara

1. Dakinis ("sky-goers") are tricky and playful female deities, representing the basic space of fertility out of which the play of samsara and nirvana arises.

2. Dharmadhatu is all-encompassing space, unconditional totality—unoriginating and unchanging—in which all phenomena arise, dwell, and cease. Dharmakaya is enlightenment itself, wisdom beyond any reference point—unoriginated, primordial mind, devoid of content.

Chapter 6. Totality

1. For this sense of lineal, see the Vidyadhara's reference to a "lineal journey" on p. 352. Lineal here seems to refer to a sequence in which one thing follows the other, an ordinary process. As watcher checks backward and forward in the sequence of a conceptualized process, the sense of maintaining one's solid ground vis-à-vis a spacious boundary could develop. Little "checkings" back and forth to confirm the ground would be cigarettes exchanged at the border.

2. The wheel of life is a graphic representation of samsaric existence. It is held by Yama, the lord of death.

3. Buddha nature is the enlightened essence inherent in sentient beings.

4. *Prajna* (Tib. *sherab*, knowledge) is the natural sharpness or awareness that sees, discriminates, and also sees through conceptual discrimination. "Lower prajna" includes any sort of worldly knowledge (how to cook a meal, for example). "Higher prajna" includes two stages: seeing phenomena as impermanent, egoless, and suffering; and a higher prajna that sees a direct knowledge of things as they are. *Jnana* (Tib. *yeshe*, wisdom) is the wisdom-activity of enlightenment, transcending all dualistic conception. One's being is spontaneously wise, without needing to seek for it. The Tibetan term means "primordially knowing."

Chapter 7. The Mandala of Unconditioned Being

1. Amrita is blessed liquor, used in vajrayana meditation practices.

2. The yanas ("vehicles") in Buddhism are progressive levels of intellectual teachings and meditative practices. The three main yanas are hinayana ("small vehicle"), mahayana ("great vehicle"), and vajrayana ("indestructible vehicle"). The vajrayana is composed of six subsidiary yanas, making nine in all.

3. Mahakalas are wrathful deities whose function is to protect the practitioner from deceptions and sidetracks.

Part Two

Chapter 1. The Basic Ground

1. This refers to the Buddhist teaching of the eight consciousnesses, which originated in the Yogachara school. The first five are the five sense consciousnesses. The sixth is mind (Skt. *manovijnana,* Tib. *yi kyi nampar shepa*), which coordinates the data of the sense consciousnesses (so that, e.g., the color, shape, and odor of a lemon are ascribed to the same object). The seventh consciousness (Skt. *klishta-manas,* Tib. *nyön yi*) is the cloudy mind that instigates subjectivity, or self-consciousness. It carries the embryonic sense of duality. The eighth consciousness (Skt. *alayavijnana,* Tib. *künshi nampar shepa*) is the relatively undifferentiated basic, or "storehouse," consciousness. It is called the storehouse consciousness because it carries the karmic tendencies that originate from past karma and generate new karma when elaborated by the other seven consciousnesses. The new activity in turn leaves fresh karmic traces in the alaya, so that an endless cycle is perpetuated.

Chapter 2. The Birth of the Path

1. See preceding note.

2. See following note.

Chapter 5. A Glimpse of the Five Buddha Families

1. In the discussion that follows the Vidyadhara makes the traditional vajrayana correlation between the five buddha families and the five skandhas,

the five functional building blocks of ego. The five buddha families are given in the order buddha, ratna, padma, karma, and vajra and correlated respectively with the skandhas of form (Skt. *rupa,* Tib. *suk*), feeling (Skt. *vedana,* Tib. *tsorwa*), impulse (Skt. *samjna,* Tib. *dushe*), concept (Skt. *samskara,* Tib. *duje*), and consciousness (Skt. *vijnana,* Tib. *nampar shepa*). The Vidyadhara would later adopt the translation "perception" rather than "impulse" for the third skandha, and "formation" rather than "concept" for the fourth skandha.

2. The questioner is alluding to the Vidyadhara's description of the development of ego in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1987), p. 125. The birth of duality in the first skandha is described in terms of an open expanse of desert in which one grain of sand sticks out its neck and catches a glimpse of itself.

Glimpses of Space

The Feminine Principle and Evam

Edited by

Judith L. Lief

Editor's Introduction

This book comprises the lightly edited transcripts of two seminars: "The Feminine Principle," given at Karmê Chöling in January 1975, and "EVAM," given at Karma Dzong in Boulder, Colorado in April 1976. These two seminars are closely intertwined with a third seminar, "The Three Bodies of Enlightenment," which the Vidyadhara presented at Karma Dzong, Boulder, February, 1975. For that reason, Vajradhatu Publications is planning to bring out the transcript of that seminar as a companion volume in the future.

Until now, only a sourcebook version of the Feminine Principle transcripts has been available, and that only to Vajradhatu tantric practitioners. When he presented the EVAM seminar in Boulder, Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche required that all students first thoroughly study the teachings of the Feminine Principle seminar. Students had to take a series of four classes before they were allowed to attend the EVAM seminar, and the Vidyadhara peeked in on these classes regularly, making his presence known. It was clear that he took the requirements seriously. Later the Vidyadhara restricted the distribution of the tapes of these two seminars to his senior students, only those who had been formally accepted to begin their vajrayana training. Therefore it is with some caution that we have decided to make this material available for the first time without restrictions. However, since the tapes have by now been available for several years, it seemed appropriate and timely.

Please keep in mind that these teachings are rare and precious. It is a great gift to be able to study them. May they inspire you in your practice and in your commitment to benefit other beings.

Part One

THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE

TALK I

The Mother Principle

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING TO DISCUSS here is the Buddhist approach to basic principles in feminine reality. So this particular seminar, I would like to point out quite boldly and specifically, is not a politics or sociology course, but is connected with the practice of meditation and phenomenal reality, and the feminine aspects as well as the masculine aspects connected with that.

We could approach the basic question from the beginning, in terms of the categories or principles known in the Buddhist tradition as the three jewels: the buddha, or teacher; the dharma, or the teachings; and the sangha, or group of followers, students. We are starting from the question of whether the chicken is first or the egg is first—that is to say, whether Buddha is first or dharma is first, in this particular case. We are not yet going to discuss if eggs should be utilized as further chickens or as part of a meal.

This question of whether buddha is first or dharma is first is a very interesting one. If there were no buddha, it would not be possible to have dharma; but in order for there to be a buddha, there would have to be dharma. A lot of teachers in the past have spent their lifetimes studying which comes first—as much as people spend time trying to figure out which came first, the egg or the chicken. It seems that both are related to the feminine principle. If there is an egg, then the feminine principle had to be involved; even if there is a chicken, the feminine principle had to be involved. That same principle implies that the originator of dharma, the originator of buddha, had to come first. At this level, we

are talking about the question of the mother principle, the level of totality and background.

In the Buddhist tradition somehow—as a result of peoples' experience, their research work, so to speak, and from the example of the Buddha's life—it is quite clear that the dharma came first: the dharma of reality. That is to say, pain and pleasure, the conflicts of life, the idea of falsity and the idea of truth. Following the principle of the four noble truths, Buddha's first reaction to the world was the discovery that there is unspeakable, unnameable, fundamental pain, which produces the reality of the confused realm. Because of that, he also realized that there is a realm of nonexistence—no ego, no basic being, no substance. But at the same time, there had to be some intelligent mind to experience that realm. That intelligence is called prajna. Consequently, prajna is referred to as the mother of all the buddhas. So as far as basic reality is concerned, there is nothing but space, unconditional space, space that is not defined or labeled as product or producer. That is the mother of all the buddhas.

The question is, "How will we be able to experience that space, to understand it?" According to the teachings, the answer seems to be that we cannot understand that space, we cannot perceive it. There is no way to find out even whether that space does exist or does not. At the same time, we question oursleves. "Who said that?"—but if you ask somebody, nobody said it. But it still hums in the background. Such primordial gossip is all-pervasive and one can't ignore it. And having heard that gossip, if you try to find the source, you cannot trace it back.

That space is called, in the traditional terminology, dharmadhatu: *dharma* meaning, in this case, "basic norm," and *dhatu* meaning "atmosphere." Such a basic norm is created by this atmosphere. Not "created," that is a wrong term, but it actually exists like that. There is a basic atmosphere of openness and all-pervasiveness involved, so in this case we cannot talk about the mother principle as being one or many, but in some sense, the mother principle came first.

Prajnaparamita is actually *not* the name of the mother principle. The word *prajnaparamita* means "transcendental knowledge." The mother of all the buddhas is in some sense an incorrect term, in fact. When we talk about the mother of all the buddhas, we are talking in terms of its *function:* somebody produced a child, therefore she should be called "mother." That is still a conditional definition. If we look back, we cannot even call it mother. We cannot even define this particular relative

norm as a masculine or feminine principle—we can only talk in terms of the basic atmosphere. The only way or reason we can refer to it as feminine principle is that it has the sense of accommodation and the potentiality of giving birth. Prajnaparamita, transcendental knowledge, is an *expression* of that feminine principle, called "mother." Mother is one of its attributes. Maybe that attribute is just a cliché; maybe it is purely a concept. But beyond that, there is nothing actually nameable, nothing actually workable.

Supposing one of its attributes is being a mother, then we could say, "Who is the father?" We generally automatically assume that if we call somebody mother, it means that somebody has a child and a husband, or father of the child. But in this case that doesn't seem to work. In some sense, the whole thing seems to be a dead end. Not dead end in the sense of being blocked or not having any further to go back, but dead end in the sense that we find that the child is born from this mother without a father. We do not know whether this mother is masculine or feminine. Something happened in the realm of the primeval state. Something funny has happened. Something has come about without any reason, without any causal characteristics. According to the descriptions of the Buddha, prajnaparamita is referred to as unborn, unceasing; its nature is like that of the sky. That is only understandable to the wisdom of discriminating awareness. Therefore, discriminating awareness is referred to as the mother of all the buddhas.

If this basic whatever is unborn, unoriginated, and unceasing, how can it exist, how can we talk about it? Well, we cannot talk about it. But we can—and actually, we are doing so at this very moment. Impossibilities are possible, un-talkabout-ness can be talked. One of the definitions of dharmadhatu is that which possesses basic norm, that which possesses basic intelligence. But again, we have to be very careful: we are not talking about the alayavijnana principle of storehouse consciousness in this case; we are talking about something beyond that. We are not talking of something that contains something within it.

It seems that this fundamental mother principle, feminine principle, if you could call it that, or "it," if you like—it has become feminine principle and it has become mother because it became expressive. It could manifest itself into various attributes: it became angry, seductive, yielding, accepting, shy, and beautiful. It became feminine principle, and then it became mother principle. And it made love to its own expressions.

Therefore it produced a buddha—as well as samsara, of course, and all the rest of it.

We could have a discussion on that, if you like.

Student: This thing being referred to as "it," or the feminine principle, which is somewhat beyond samsaric mind or even the alaya consciousness, seems to be very far away. And it is definitely it, and it definitely exists, and it definitely creates or gives expression to buddhas and samsara. It expresses itself in wrathful ways and seductive ways, et cetera. What is the difference between this definite thing that exists and the common notion of theism or God?

Vidyadhara: God is not referred to as she, usually. [*Laughter*] I think also, one point is that God had a definite intention to do something about it and produced the world; whereas, as far as this is concerned, it is just accidental, purely accidental. It begins to put on makeup and so it becomes feminine. This is much more passive and realistic. God seems to be very dreamy and impractical—and very dramatic, unnecessarily so. Moreover, there is a much stronger sense of "I." God is supposed to have already separated himself from the rest of his creation—before he created anything, He had become himself already. As you know, the utterance of God says, "I am that which I am." So he is what he is, therefore he produced the others. In this case, that is not necessary—its beauty and its makeup are not apart from itself. Therefore it becomes feminine, which is very passive. We could almost say the whole thing is accidental. And in terms of God principle, it has more substance.

S: It sounded very much like the description of the immaculate conception when you were saying, "This is the mother that gives birth to buddha, but in this case there's no father." What's the difference between saying that and saying there was an immaculate conception?

V: I think the question of purity doesn't enter here particularly at all. This does not concern conception. In fact, nobody got pregnant—you just produced buddha on the spot. So we are not talking about the womb, particularly, and we are not talking about an embryo in this case. We are saying that this has produced buddha on the spot, at the drop of a hat.

S: I wanted to ask one more thing. When you said that it could be called feminine or masculine, that it was almost accidental that it was called feminine—were you saying that it was sort of cultural that it was called feminine principle?

V: Well, I think it was a practical thing. If anybody has born a child, you wouldn't call them a masculine person who can bear a child; obviously it is a feminine one. And if you have born a child, even if you are a masculine person, you are called mother.

S: The feeling I get of this expression of space is that it could be something like a rock, that a rock could be an expression of space.

V: Why did you say that?

S: Because it seems like your idea of space is something more than our conventional view, in the sense that there is nothing there. It seems that space can have attributes and qualities that could be an expression of it, and even a rock could be an expression of space. Is that wrong?

V: Well, the only problem is that a rock is different from space—unless you are inside the rock.

S: What is rockness, as opposed to space?

V: A rock is a rock, you know. [*Laughter*]

S: As *opposed* to space? So it is something *outside* of space, then?

V: Well, a rock is sitting there, and rain falls on it and snow falls on it. You build a house with it and you walk over it, but you can't do that with space.

S: So then there is a duality, with dharmadhatu as all-encompassing space, and then things or rocks or various materials that are hanging out in that?

V: Well, everything seems to be, anything you can think of—or you can't think of.

S: Anything you can or cannot think of?

V: Yes.

S: What I'm trying to get to is that your idea of space is more than the conventional idea, such as air or something like that.

V: We are not talking about outer space. We are talking about that which is—that which *isn't,* at the same time.

S: Well, what are the attributes of dharmadhatu that you said it expressed? It put on makeup, it took on attributes.

V: Yes, which is a part of itself. Space is usually adorned or embellished with its outlines, which is part of the expression of space.

S: Could those outlines be a rock or something like that?

V: Yes. They could be anything.

S: Isn't there something unaccommodating about a specific attribute?

V: Anything other, anything conventionally not known as space, is part of space's attributes.

S: Okay. But that seems to have some lack of accommodation in it, doesn't it.

V: It is very accommodating.

S: What did you mean by basic norm? I did not understand that word at all.

V: Well, it's some sort of law that is not particularly created by a lawmaker. It is just characteristics of whatever it may be.

S: Just what is.

V: Yeah.

S: What are dakinis?

V: One never knows. [*Scattered laughter*] One never knows!

S: Rinpoche, could you please explain what attribute would accommodate the manifestation of prajna, the mother aspect?

V: I think it's like when you throw a stone in a very still pond—there are ripples that express that you have thrown a stone into the pond. You have thrown a stone in this water, which is called a pond, and the ripples begin to expand and dissolve at the edges of the pond. It's something like that. It is expressing its own existence through demonstrating, exhibiting, some form of glamour—in the form of passion, aggression, being seductive, whatever it may be.

S: It think one other time you said it was something like pollution, that would manifest into a form. Is that right?

V: That's an interesting metaphor. I suppose it could be pollution if somebody got an experience out of it. It's anything you can think of: lighting a match in the dark, somebody tripping over dog shit, anything.

S: You said that it just happened accidentally. Did you mean that the Buddha was an accident?

V: Mm-hmm. A big accident. A catastrophe!

S: Is prajnaparamita the intelligence that knows dharmadhatu?

V: Yes. It knows its mother.

S: But is prajnaparamita called mother, too?

V: Yes.

S: So there's a mother that knows the mother?

V: Yes. The makeup knows what it belongs to. The makeup knows its source, its background.

S: Could it be said that prajna is the self-consciousness of dharmadhatu?

V: Not very much self there, but you could call it that way if you like. That would be some kind of Jewish logic.

S: Before, you said that whatever wasn't space was the attributes of space. What would be the substance of an attribute?

V: Well, that's a question: there doesn't seem to be anything—it seems to be everything. We do not know. We only know the gossip.

S: We seem to be able to know something is unknowable though, as dharmadhatu?

V: Because it's unknowable, therefore we know it.

S: Why? The same thing doesn't apply with the attributes, though—because *that's* unknowable we *don't* know it.

V: Attributes are easy to know. They are prajnaparamita and everything.

S: Oh, I see. You mean we can know what we don't know, but we can't know what we know?

V: Sure. [*Laughter*]

S: Perfectly clear. I should have known!

V: Well, maybe we should stop here tonight so we have a chance to sleep and rest. Although this is a short seminar, still I would like to encourage people to try as much as they could to take part in the practice of meditation. We feel it is important that you do not become too heady through the seminar, and that we are not transplanting further samsara in your head and in our scene. In order to keep everything unpolluted, the best way to do something about that, or at least attempt to do something about it, is the practice of meditation. That is very important, needless to say. Basically it is part of the seminar intention that you should get enough chance to sit, as well as to think and listen. Unless everything is on an equal basis, you become too much of something or other, so that you are lopsided. In order to make this particular experience experiential, it is necesssary to relate to the whole seminar. That is a very important point.

Once again, thank you for being patient. And welcome to Karmê Chöling.

TALK 2

Unborn, Unceasing

CONTINUING WHAT WE DISCUSSED YESTERDAY, the manifestation from the unknown and its process to reality, so to speak, is quite an involved one. I suppose you want to get into this.

UNBORN

That principle is identified as a principle, or substance, with particular qualifications. It is threefold, as we discussed yesterday: unborn, unceasing, and its nature is like that of space, or sky. So the question of unborn, in this case, is that the basic ground has manifested itself. It is taking a direction toward reality, through a sense of love, compassion, and warmth. The three qualities of love, compassion, and warmth are synonymous with the desire to manifest at all. The desire to manifest is that the basic space has been qualified, or become a personality. When that space has a tinge of something or other, then that is called manifestation—or love, compassion, and warmth.

At that point the process is still very undefined, in some sense; but at the same time it has the qualities of unborn. For one thing, there is no one to give birth. Another part is the rejection of a particular birth, a particular channel for birth, a channel to be born as reality, which is known as dharmata, in Buddhist terminology. *Dharma* is "basic norm"; *ta* is "ness"; so *dharmata* is a sense of "isness," or "nowness." In other words, it's a question of living reality rather than preconceived, or uncertainty, or yielding towards a certain particular direction of giving birth to reality.

Unborn is also qualified as "unborn and not having the desire to be born." It is not willing to play with sophistries or garbage of all kinds. So the only basic area or basic feeling that we can come across is a sense of self-existing, transcendental arrogance. There is an unyielding quality, and there is a sense of complete certainty, at this point, which makes birth possible, unborn birth possible. Such confidence comes from having no characteristics, no background. Therefore we could say quite plainly that you have nothing to lose. So you can afford to be arrogant and proud and chauvinistic, in some sense, at that point. But some basic depth and basic texture that is fertility oriented takes place. Such fertility orientation is only manifested at the level of its fickleness, in the form of exchange back and forth: you are willing to play with phenomena, willing to give birth to phenomena at all. Therefore there is a sense of journeying, which is made out of energy. And the basic characteristic of energy there is its fickleness, its vibrating quality—the fickle quality of being willing to *associate* itself with something or other.

This approach may be quite similar to that of Nagarjuna's, when he talks about the Madhyamaka philosophy and his points of view to it. He said, "Since I do not stand for any opposite arguments; therefore, I cannot be challenged." It is that kind of fertility of really raving on some kind of egoless trip: you have nothing to lose; therefore you begin to gain the whole cosmos or universe. In that kind of chauvinistic approach, you are dying to give birth at the same time, because you have nothing to lose. The conventional idea of giving birth is that you are stuck with your kid or whatever. You have to feed the kid and change the kid's diapers, you have to give some energy—you can't have free time to go to theaters and go to the cinema and have dinner dates with friends. You are stuck with this particular kid, and you are imprisoned in some sense. But in this case, it's not so much details but the general creativity that takes place within the base of the unborn level. At the unborn level giving birth is not particularly accented as a reproduction of your image to someone else's, but it is a process of embellishment that takes place. That is regarded as giving birth—rather than producing a child who is separate from you, and you have to cut the umbilical cord, so you are producing another little monster outside of you.

I'm afraid the whole thing seems to be quite abstract at this level. I appreciate this very much as I haven't had a chance to speak this way for a long time. The question of unborn could be said to be an

unoriginated one, I suppose. It is not production of some kind—but the question of unbornness is putting further embellishment on unborn.

[*Long pause*] What were we talking about? [*Laughter*]

Unbornness becomes *more* unborn if you begin to embellish it with its attributes. Obviously you accept that logic, that's the usual situation—that you could become more of you if you adorn yourself with all kinds of things; that adorning yourself makes more of you. Embellishment, in this case, is nothing, not very much. It is simply a sense of arrogance and a sense of fearlessness that whatever it is, it is presentable and powerful. It is more a taking pride in nonexistent achievement—which is in *itself* an achievement. Very abstract.

Saraha and other siddhas talk about this as being the imprint of a bird in the sky, which is the basic metaphor, the closest to it that one can use. In this case it is an embellishment of the sky and the bird at the same time. We are uncertain as to which one we are trying to embellish, the bird or the sky. But something is embellished by both; they are complementing each other. The sky is embellished by the bird, and the bird is embellished by the sky because a bird cannot leave any trace behind it. Naropa talks in terms of a snake uncoiling itself in midair: if you throw a coiled snake into midair, it uncoils itself and lands on the ground gracefully.

All of those metaphors and reference points begin to speak in terms of self-existing, self-doing, self-accomplishment of some kind. So we can say that reality can be realized only by realizing its unrealness. This is tantric jargon. [*Laughter*] It is not one of Rinzai's koans, particularly. It is not as subtle as Rinzai's approach. This is more bold and absurd, as you can see. But at the same time, we take pride in that. Maybe that has something to do with what we were talking about as arrogance—in this case, the basic principle of becoming, of femininity. That's what we are talking about at this point.

Becoming, or femininity, is very intangible. The feminine principle has become—for a long time in the history of the human race, from as soon as philosophy was set up—a debatable point. People try to create chauvinistic barriers of all kinds, a masculine *and* feminine approach. But none of them have become particularly good ones, or at least, enlightened ones. So if you resort back to tantric attitudes and ideas of feminine principle, you end up seeing everything as a real world that you cannot

grasp. That seems to be the essence of the feminine principle—that real world that you cannot grasp.

You cannot actually capture that in the form of chauvinism. Why? Because the feminine principle is the mother of all principles. If you can catch the mother, then the mother ceases to be a mother—it becomes a lover. So the mother is regarded as something that is hierarchically above. Nobody will question the existence of the mother; the mother reigns on a high throne. She just behaves as a mother.

In order to experience that kind of situation, that kind of reality—however unrealistic it may be—one has to be willing to give in to it, to abandon trying to capture it philosophically, or by metaphysical concepts. You cannot put the mother principle in black-and-white written language. Although books on prajnaparamita are written, as the mother of all the buddhas, those books say that this book cannot be captured, cannot be put into a corner, cannot be cornered. This book cannot be realized. If you *have* realized the meaning of this book, you are regarded as a heretic!

[*Long pause*]

Unceasing

We can discuss unceasing here, which is our second topic tonight. Unceasing. Unceasing occurred because it is unborn, obviously. [*Laughs*] You could say unborn is some kind of birth, *maybe so,* but on the other hand *absolutely not.* For the very fact that the idea of that becomes reality—that means that idea cannot be captured, which is the unceasing quality. You cannot grasp, you cannot hold, you cannot capture, anymore. The reason it is called unceasing is because out of that particular arrogance that we discussed, some kind of leak of secret information or of secret experience begins to take place. On the quiet, the unborn begins to manufacture a world, an underworld—in midair, the bottom of the ocean. And that is unceasing because it cannot be obstructed or prevented.

If the underground world is very active, the overground world of the established samsaric administration cannot see; it is not able to see that particular world. In other words, we are talking about the black market of the mother. That concept is extremely powerful, *extremely* powerful.

That concept is some kind of spiritual atomic bomb—that has been manufactured in the basement. [*Laughter*]

The idea of unceasing is not so much unceasing as a resigned, passive thing—but it is unable to be controlled by any efficient organization of anything. The overlay of reality is unable to detect the underlayer of reality anymore. The surface may go quite nonchalantly, it usually does, but the undercurrent is extraordinarily powerful. It begins to manufacture a world of its own, in the feminine principle of potentiality, embryonic and resourceful and glamorous at the same time.

Well, I'm afraid that maybe you don't have any questions. [*Laughter*] I have completely cut its own throat, that is to say, the questions. However, I would like to make a gesture here, that we have space for that.

Student: Last night you talked about space expressing itself in attributes, and that was like space putting on makeup. Are we, as we generally see ourselves in this physical world of matter, that makeup? Or one aspect of that makeup?

Vidyadhara: The physical world is not regarded as the makeup, it is the body. Within the physical world, the *expressions* of the physical world—that fire burns, water moistens, wind blows, space accommodates—that is the makeup. So the idea of makeup is expressing its own integrity.

S: You mean that the makeup is the qualities that the physical world has?

V: Yes.

S: If you took the qualities *away* from the physical world, what would you have left?

V: Basic minimum. [*Laughter*]

S: Well, considering that basic minimum, which doesn't have any qualities of its own—what's physical about it?

V: That's the biggest question of all! It doesn't have any, therefore it does. [*Laughter*]

S: It has the quality of having no qualities.

V: And all potentialities.

S: You mean the *potentiality* of having makeup is another of its qualities?

V: Yes, obviously. Space is not particularly castrated.

S: [*Pause*] Mm-hmm. [*Laughter*] It sounds like you're saying space is fertile in some sense.

V: That's one of the qualities.

S: Now we've got three qualities. Is space anything *more* than the potentiality for the makeup?

V: As well, space is that which accommodates *room* for the makeup.

S: Space is that which accommodates room for the makeup?

V: If you missed a part of your makeup on your face—that's space. [*Laughter*]

S: Wait, when you said *room* for the makeup—

V: I don't mean a room with windows and doors.

S: —you mean by room ability to accommodate?

V: Yes.

S: So space is that which accommodates the accommodation of makeup?

V: Yes.

S: Then what is the accommodation of makeup, if that is not space but something that is accommodated by space?

V: Well, that is the same thing.

S: So you have space accommodated by space, and that's space?

V: You got it! [*Uproarious laughter*] It is a question of making love to itself—but not quite at the level of masturbation.

S: What is the relationship between the black market of the mother and practice?

V: What is practice?

S: Meditation.

V: *The* practice.

S: *The* practice.

V: Mm-hmm. I think they are synonymous, as a matter of fact. Synonymous, yes. Meditation *is* the black market, from that point of view—it is a very powerful black market that could change a nation's economy.

S: What would you call the law enforcement officers trying to clean up that black market?

V: Well, I think law and order becomes, at that point, part of the black market. In the beginning they attempt to speak the language: the organization is trying to speak the language of the black market. And then—when they try to speak the language so that they could communicate with the black marketers—they find *themselves* in the black market.

S: The black market that you were just referring to, is that synonymous with sangha?

V: Not quite, it is the ghetto of the sangha. And actually, we have not gotten to that level yet, particularly. It is a very embryonic state we are talking about. We are not talking about anything that is actually applicable; we are talking about the metaphysics of the feminine principle at this point.

S: Also, could you explain the relationship between dharmadhatu as you spoke about it last night, dharmakaya, and dharmata? Mostly, how does the principle of dharmakaya relate to dharmadhatu? Is it some potential energy within that or—

V: It seems that dharmakaya comes much later, actually. What we are talking about at this point is dharmadhatu, on a very primeval, embryonic level.

S: So dharmakaya would be?

V: Obsolete.

S: In the beginning you said that the substance of the feminine principle is threefold: unborn, unceasing, and like the sky. You described unborn and unceasing, but you forgot the sky.

V: Tomorrow. It's too many things to say at once.

S: Is space associated with both the underlay and overlay of reality?

V: I think so. You see, the underlay and overlay are interdependent, which is not a complete world. In order to have a unified world, in order to be under, in order to be over, there has to be some governing factor, which is space.

S: Is there anything you can say about the world that is revealed by participating in this black market?

V: What do you mean by this black market?

S: The black market that you spoke of.

V: You don't mean this or that—do you mean, *it?*

S: It.

V: Yeah. Well, I think that you cannot get away from it, cannot not participate. You are participating in any case.

S: Yeah, but is there something you can say about the qualities of the alternative world that is sort of created on the quiet?

V: On the quiet is not regarded as an alternative—it is *necessary.* Among fires, they have their secret language, to be together as fire as much as possible—whether it is lit with flint or matches. Among waters,

it is the same thing: they have their secret message all the time. It is a black market that doesn't have to be transmitted to each other or work out passwords. It is a self-existing black market that doesn't need a password anymore. It is a self-existing one already.

S: Are you saying that the black market is really the *only* market?

V: Well, that's just an expression, I'm not talking about marketing in terms of—what's the word?

S: Production? Commerce? Barter?

V: —commerce. I'm talking about black market in terms of purely the exchange of money and goods taking place that the rest of society doesn't know about. Basically what it does is use raw material.

S: What's happening with the masculine principle while all this is going on with the feminine principle?

V: That hasn't arrived yet, at this point.

S: You mean it hasn't manifested?

V: Well, as it goes on it *does* manifest, but somehow it is not quite visible yet.

S: Is the feminine principle manifest before the masculine principle?

V: Seemingly so.

S: Would understanding the white reality, the white market, as ego, be in some way correct? That the world being created, the black market of the mother, is happening beneath the surface of what the ego sees? And if so, then the ego's willingness to learn that language, to be interested in communication with the black marketeers—is that another form of subtle ego game, hoping it can do commerce in that market in some way?

V: First, it wouldn't be all that serious about the whole thing. And another, the whole thing is not really divided, particularly, it is an organic process. If you have ups or if you have downs, they are both the same thing. The growth of trees and flowers is the expression of the depressions of the earth, otherwise you couldn't have trees and flowers growing. So it works both ways. You can see beautiful flowers, with honey and nectar and everything—that is an expression of the depressions, which is the black market. [*Laughs*]

S: So then ego in some sense is an expression of the accommodation of space?

V: Well, supposedly. But at the same time, it doesn't manifest that way. The whole thing becomes very confused. But what we are talking

about at this point is a very primordial level, an early stage. We have not gotten into the later stages yet. So I wouldn't take it too seriously, in terms of a pragmatic level.

Well, talking about pragmatism, people should be hungry. We should close.

TALK 3

Nature Like Sky

GIVING BIRTH TO REALITY. I think we should be very careful about what we mean by "reality," at this point. We do not know exactly, but we have some vague concept of it. And probably it would be difficult for those who haven't followed the previous two talks on this particular content to follow completely what we are talking about tonight, tomorrow, and so on. Therefore, it may be worthwhile for newcomers to try to follow up on what has already been said yesterday and the day before.

The question of reality that we are going to discuss tonight contains the basic capacity to give birth to reality; and the second question is, what is reality? The first one, the basic capacity to give birth to reality, is based on the idea of a sense of space: traditionally it has been said that its nature is like the sky. The reason why its nature is like the sky is that tantric imagery speaks of a triangle, or cervix, which is the basis, background, in which birth takes place as you present yourself as the mother principle. The notion of triangle is an interesting point. The definition of triangle refers to the three principles: unborn as one corner, unceasing as another corner, and its nature is like sky as another corner. So there are three corners, three qualifications, three principles. That brings a sense of triangle, at this point.

That basic point is based on a sense of noncentralized space, in terms of one's awareness. It is purely that there is a sense of reminder, or boundary, which actually helps us relate with reality as we go about our daily experiences. The only reminder that takes place is the absence of

our awareness; that is the actual reminder. Once that has taken place, then we begin to feel that we have reached a state in which we are not aware of things that are going on around our life.

That sense of reminder takes place on different levels of intensity in our life. Sometimes we crash into a wall as we drive our motorcar, and we are reminded that we should drive very carefully in the future. Sometimes we just burn our finger, or we just have a small scar on our hand or a little bruise on our body. We have gone slightly too far, but somewhat we are sensible enough to refrain from getting too much damage to our body. We get pushed back and we begin to think twice. That is usually the case that happens.

A lot of images could take place. Also, a lot of images are further food for losing one's awareness, because once you have been reminded you regard that as a very solid and extraordinary message. You get tripped up on that particular message; in turn, you go beyond that level, more than you came. You get in more accidents and you become more hurt, thinking that you can play with phenomena because you got the message and you made the connections already. This is one of the problems that usually takes place in our life, overconfidence, which makes things very chaotic and lethal, in some sense. That is the problem with that kind of reminder, that kind of framework. It is literally a framework; but in this case, the frame happens to be a triangle instead of a square. It is to frame a picture of our life in it.

That is the nature like sky, discussed in the traditional framework. The nature like that of the sky is governed by unborn, unceasing, and openness. At the same time, we could also correlate it with three principles that exist: impermanence, suffering, and egolessness, known as the three gates of liberation according to vajrayana discipline, or the three marks of existence according to the hinayana discipline. We could also include that as part of its expression of the spaciousness.

That spaciousness contains a sense of openness. Openness, in this case, is the level where you are not taking too much advantage of your freedom. You expand as much as you could, you can, and then you do not advance beyond that level. You keep your space intact and workable, as a basic principle. This is like the analogy of the cervix, in which a baby could be born up to a certain level of size. You cannot give birth to a gigantic monster and you cannot give birth to a too little one—it has to be somewhat human size, as far as baby size goes. The function of the

cervix is to act as some kind of censor. It acts as a customs official at entrances or exits. Anyone who is going to be born in this world is being censored and checked, and if they are too big, they cannot come out—unless you have a cesarean or something of that nature, which is an extraordinary thing to do. And if you are too insigificant, you are not worth bothering with.

It is like entering another country. When you come to another country, you have to show your passport and declare to the customs officials how big, how famous, what kind of wealth you are going to bring into the country, and whether the country can afford to accept such wealth. If you are bringing too many heavy-handed things, the country ends up having economic problems, if you bring too much stuff that is worth a lot of money. Or if you yourself are a heavy-handed person, that might put the citizens of that country out of jobs, because you occupy a great deal of time and space. So usually the governmental and economic approach is very careful as to how much such a country can accept your entrance into that new country, in terms of how much goods you bring and how much knowledge you bring, and if that knowledge is useful or destructive or whatever it may be in this country that you are trying to come into.

The same kind of process takes place at the level of the mother principle's giving birth to reality. It is the same kind of process. The question there is that some kind of basic censorship takes place. Although when we talk about "its nature is like sky," it seems to be carefree and happy-go-lucky, kind of spacious, and everything is good; somehow, the more spaciousness there is, that much more there are restrictions to it. The space becomes very sensitive and very discriminating in some sense, but at the same time very open-minded equally. That seems to be the basic point of giving birth to reality from the notion of space.

I think we could discuss as far as that level today. We could discuss further details tomorrow, if space and time are available to us. You are welcome to ask any existing questions.

Student: I take your first example very personally. Once about three years ago when I was studying your teachings in writing, I burned my hand, and that same day went on to destroy my car and drive it into a brick wall. Later on, in a seminar in New York, I asked you how this would resolve itself, as we are all supposed to remember the lion's roar

and have courage. I don't. Since you say that it is inescapable that when we get the first warning we are so tripped out by it that we don't—I mean, it seems like you are saying that we will inevitably have the second accident. What is the solution to that?

Vidyadhara: The point is that you are not trying to gain victory from this particular warfare. You do not regard the whole thing as warfare, you regard it as just another way of settling down in that particular country. It seems that your attitude is that when you come to a new country that accepted you as a resident, you get a visa as a resident, and once you are accepted as a resident you have the freedom to do anything, go everywhere. But at the same time, you are not allowed to bargain at the supermarket. You collect as much as you can collect in your cart and you say to the cashier, "Come here. Look, I bought a lot of stuff here, how much reduction could you give me?" And you cannot bargain them down. Everything has to be counted, and it depends on the price tag.

From that point of view, coming to the supermarket is very interesting symbolism. That place you accepted, the country where you came to, is your country for the time being: therefore you go to the supermarket and make yourself at home. Having gone to the supermarket, you cannot bargain, you have to accept the values that are set up already. You have to go along with the law and order that exists in that country. You cannot get reductions, and you can't bargain down at the supermarket. So you can't do anything: you can't get out of it, you have to go along with it.

S: And you get your freedom from going along with it?

V: Yes. You can buy anything you want, but you have to pay for it, as we know. But paying for it is also part of your expression of freedom.

S: Very often the symbol of the overlapping triangles appears. What is the meaning of that?

V: I think it is a question of the symbol of double vision, that you see reality and you also see the shadow of it. Therefore, reality and its shadow begin to form a pattern together, which is the experience of reality and also the experience of its spokesman, at the same time. Nothing particularly Jewish.

S: In relation to what you just said, what is the significance of Buddha having been born out of his mother's side?

V: We do not know. Whether it was a cesarean or actually giving birth, we do not know. From a commonsense point of view, the side is

a question of bypassing the ordinary exit. It wasn't regarded as a cesarean, it was a simple accident: his mother took a walk in the garden and he suddenly appeared. He stepped out of her side and spoke and walked and behaved as a little prince. So the whole thing is very mythical. But at the same time, the question of being free from any kind of conditions seems to be a very interesting point. Maybe he was the son of prajnaparamita, who doesn't have to go through the hassles and problems of conventionality. He did something very extraordinary and revolutionary—he stepped out of his mother's side and he began to speak and to walk.

S: You started out talking about the birth of reality from the mother principle, with the three qualities of the triangle being the cervix. And then you talked about awareness, being aware of the boundaries. I didn't get the transition to awareness, in the sense of awareness as I know it. I mean, the birth of reality from the mother principle, seems very distant—but awareness of burning my fingers seems very close.

V: I think we are saying the same thing. That is giving birth.

S: Then it is not nearly as far away as I think.

V: We are not talking about the meaning of once upon a time you were born as a little kid, in this case. But we are saying that you are being born each time, all the time, and talking about how that works with our reality.

S: What does the word boundary mean in that?

V: Well, the boundary before you had the crash and after you had the crash.

S: Beyond the boundary lies reality, or within the boundary lies reality?

V: Both. Reality is reality. If reality is framed with unreality around it, then it must be false. If falsity is framed with the truth, there is something very suspicious about that. It sounds like a Watergate plot.

S: You talked about what seems to be a control factor, which you called a customs officer and a censor, that has some relationship to the nature of the birth of reality. I am wondering if you can say some more about what this quality is—who is the censor or what is it?

V: I think if I said too much it would probably be unhelpful. We have to find out. Things are not very easy. We cannot just study the whole thing so we are geared up for everything and we can deal with it. There are guidebooks, of course, but they are not completely do-it-yourself books. The teachings are not do-it-yourself guidelines. One has to experi-

ence them. Instead of the book, one has to experience reality. I think the less I say the better at this point. My role seems to be to give successive warnings and successive suggestions, possibilities, and potentialities—and then you go along and you make the journey yourself.

S: Is part of that journey dealing with, or having a relationship with, that censor in meditation?

V: As well as anything that you can think of in life. Things that are uncertain to you and things that seem very certain to you—everything is included.

S: The way you talk about the framework and the reminders to pay attention to the situation feels a little bit like the bodhisattva thing of paying attention to what sentient beings need. I am wondering if there is any relation there. It is something like the bodhisattva attending for the sake of other beings, keeping you on track through the opening or something like that?

V: We have to be very careful about what we mean by bodhisattva; we don't mean somebody who does good intentionally in order to achieve enlightenment. Remember that bodhisattvas have abandoned the notion of enlightenment already, so they are somewhat fundamentally wild people—they are also seemingly very reasonable, kind, and gentle people at the same time. But fundamentally, in the depth of their hearts, they are unpredictable people. They have abandoned the notion of enlightenment altogether. So from that point of view, we cannot regard the bodhisattva path as being very predictable, particularly. There is that element of craziness involved, even at the mahayana level.

From that point, we can say quite safely that from beginning to end, as far as Buddhism is concerned, it is an extraordinarily unconventional approach. The conventionalities, moralities, rules and regulations, sensibilities, logics, and everything concerned, are rooted in the unconventional approach. Unconventionality is not so much a question of a particular society or culture, that Buddhism may be unconventional to Westerners because it came from the East, or anything of that nature. Buddhism basically seems to be unconventional according to traditional Hinduism, which exists in the East, traditional Bön, Shinto, Taoism, any of the traditional Eastern cultures, and to Judaism and Christianity in the West. Buddhism is seen by all these established religions that exist in the East and West—and they all find Buddhism extremely irritating.

Actually, if you look at the history of Buddhism coming to various countries, people have rejected Buddhism not because they are unaccepting of the truth—they understand the logic of it—but because they found that something is very irritating about Buddhism: which is the unconventionality in accepting any common norm of traditional establishments of any kind. That seems to be part of it. But at the same time, it is quite different from just the revolutionary, or unconventionality from the point of view of carefree hippiedom. It seems to be slightly different than that. Mahayana goes along with that actually, in some sense.

Well, thank you. Ready for the next happening?
[Bodhisattva and Refuge vows]

TALK 4

Prajnaparamita

HOPEFULLY WE COULD SUM UP roughly, which is rather hard to do as we have already laid a great deal of groundwork. Maybe we will have to continue to discuss this further, at some other time.

The basic idea, in terms of the space that we discussed yesterday, is how that materialized in the living world, so to speak. One particular point I would like to make very clearly is that when we talk about experiencing the world, we are talking only in terms of the world of mind.

It is very hard to discuss the so-called real world. There doesn't seem to be one. And even if there is, discussing it would bring all kinds of false notions of it and tend to give unnecessary security for people to hang on to. So the world we are going to discuss, that we are talking about, is the world of mind. It is our perception of the world, our version of the world, which is in some sense a true world, and on the other hand, is in some sense a relative world. We do not have to make up our mind which is which, particularly. If we try to do so, again, then at that point we begin to find ourselves with even further confusion or vague assumptions. We find ourselves more confused than actually experiencing.

So the point we are talking about here is the mind's world, the various perspectives and tones, the various emotions that take place—which is actually the texture of the world, the kind of textures we have created around ourselves. The general assumptions of that particular texture are known, or categorized, into three principles in the Buddhist world. This is not particularly pejorative, necessarily, but in terms of pure energy it is known as the world of ignorance, the world of passion, and the world of aggression.

Those three worlds are somehow manifestations from space. Space in this case becomes more like sky, because very few of us have been to outer space, except one or two people. Our version of outer space is the sky. As we look up, we see the moon and the sun and stars. It is traditionally called sky, which sits on top of this earth. Mistakenly, we begin to see a blue color, and there is the rising and falling of the sun and moon. You can fly closest to it in an airplane, or if you are a bird, but you cannot cover it completely. You have to land again because of the problem of a shortage of fuel and energy—and food, if you are a bird.

So our notion of space is the sky, as far as we know, except what is theoretically written in books or what we might see through a telescope. But even then, if we are looking at the sky from a telescope, that is our version of the world of space. Traditionally space is known as like the sky, therefore; and it is the counterpart of the earth, needless to say. That particular space tends to bring some sense of sympathy, or a sympathetic atmosphere, to the earth. It encourages the earth to exist by providing all kinds of spacious activities—sponsoring rain and snow and the growth of plants. It sponsors all kinds of spaces: the potter's wheel and the pot on it. It sponsors pots to break and water to boil and it sponsors all the other elements to take place, which is very sympathetic. Similarly, we can say that is the feminine principle's compassion or love—which is, again, the same principle as the physical world of space.

That particular space, that particular compassion or love, has different functions. Sometimes its function is to create harmony and relationship; sometimes it creates destruction, which is another form of harmony, in some sense. The process is developed, and because the processes begin to relate with each other, the end product is destruction. Harmony, so called, is purely a conventional idea. If we look at general and basic energy activities, there is some kind of mutual basis of things working together in a particular situation. When energies occur, they begin to project onto situations, and situations begin to move through space and manufacture all kinds of events. That is the destructive one and the creative one together.

Similarly, the enlightenment level of compassion is described as that which contains shunyata, or emptiness, and maitri, a sympathetic attitude: together they become karuna, compassion. In other words, we could say that compassion is made out of the constituents of emptiness, or spaciousness, and at the same time an element of softness, or warmth.

The spaciousness creates the destructive, the sort of vacant realm in which things cannot be latched on to and you cannot make a nest out of it. The element of maitri, or loving-kindness, begins to produce a sense of texture and solid reality. It seems that in some sense we all possess that kind of feminine principle in us, in all our states of being. We all have that feminine aspect. Whether we are men or women, we have that quality of basic accommodation without trying.

Out of that accommodation without trying, without effort, very deliberate effort begins to arise because we feel that we can make decisions. If no decision has been made, then it becomes easy to make decisions; or if decisions have been made and fall apart, we can remake decisions again. So we can execute activities in this particular world, which is the fertility aspect of the feminine principle. This encourages us to execute various activities—whether it's in the realm of confusion or in the realm of unconfusion, nonconfusion, whatever.

So the idea of the dakini principle is sometimes regarded as cunning and tricky and helpful and terrible. It also is a part of, or in fact represents in our state of being, the thought process, which acts in the midst of the process of nonthought—which is also another form of thought. So out of nonthinking, or the absence of thinking in which energy activity is building up like a vacuum—out of that, thought occurred. And thought begins to work itself out and begins to sprout arms and legs and to execute various decisions. In fact, it begins to be very fast and very speedy. And it begins to achieve some kind of purposes, whether they are absurd ones or absolutely good or solid ones—whatever—who cares at that point? Something is achieved. So that is the dakini principle, or the feminine active principle that exists in our state of being: the nonthinking process has produced a seed, and the seed sprouts arms and legs and begins to make a cup of tea.

It seems that the practice of meditation in this whole connection is developing another form of intelligence, or prajna as it is traditionally known. Prajna is another form of feminine principle, which is a very specific one, an acquisition of sharp perception. That can be achieved through the practice of meditation. Popularly, meditation is known as purely the development of steadiness and openness and intuition, the level of intuitiveness. But if you relate with the practice of meditation in connection with the feminine principle, the practice of meditation is somehow also regarded as, and becomes, an acquisition of intelligent

perception. The reason is that in the practice of meditation, when a person first begins to sit and meditate, you don't get into the stream of activities, speed, business, or whatever. Somewhat you learn to step back and view it again: it is as if instead of being in the movie, you see the footage of it.

The difference is that meditation allows you to step back and watch what is going on in the world. You do not particularly try to cultivate a learning, analytical mind; but at the same time, you learn to see how things work, without a particular analytical way but purely from perception. Then you gain some logic. You begin to get some logic and a sense of understanding how things work, the way things work. You also are able to see through the play of that particular feminine principle that exists; you begin to see through the jokes that have been played on you. You also could see that it has been helpful to you and destructive to you, and everything.

You begin to see through that by stepping back and looking at it. That is another method of the feminine principle, which is known as "she who gives birth to all the buddhas," the prajnaparamita. That is how she gave birth to all the buddhas, to the attainment of enlightenment. In this case, it is quite simply keen perception. We will be able to see the world without misunderstanding, without confusion. We will see clearly and fully the apparent phenomena play of principles, the feminine principle in particular. That seems to be the basic point. So meditation is the only way of subjugating the uncontrollable energies of the feminine principle. Meditation in itself is an act of prajna, from that point of view. Therefore it is in itself the feminine principle. Therefore the whole process here is not so much that the masculine principle and the feminine principle are having a war, but it is the feminine principle seeing itself as it is. It is as if you are looking at your hand and reading your own palm: it is part of you, therefore you can see it.

It seems that the principle of the masculine side is quite an interesting one, again. It is the accommodation of everything that allows the feminine principle to act. This masculine principle is somewhat stubborn and solid and may be slow. It is not necessarily slow as such, but the feminine principle begins to create a contrast. When somebody is going faster, then there is somebody slower, so that kind of natural contrast takes place. It also lends another kind of energy, which is that of the earth rather than that of the sky. It has a journey-upward quality rather than

a journey-downward quality. At the same time, instead of the sympathy and softness of the maitri principle that we discussed, the masculine principle seems to have a very angry state of being. It is highly complaining and resentful that you have to go through the space in order to achieve something. The masculine principle is somewhat resentful. At the same time, it gives in and accepts orders from the space—from the mother, so to speak.

In some sense the feminine principle cannot survive if, in fact, there's no one to play with—therefore, both processes are interchangeable in some sense and complementary to each other. We don't have much time to discuss the masculine principle, since we seem to be particularly highly interested in the feminine principle these days. We could discuss the details some other time. There is more to come, obviously. I would like to open this to questions.

Student: Before we were talking about the nature of the attributes of the mother principle. Does that come into the category of the masculine principle? Is that what you were referring to, is that what it is playing with?

Vidyadhara: The attributes? No, I think that has been happening with some purpose, obviously. Embellishment cannot take place without purpose, and the purpose is to subjugate or seduce the critical energy, which is the masculine energy, to seduce that. In fact, the makeup is more likely the way to intimidate the masculine principle. It is like Africans painting their faces before they have a fight, or something.

S: So the embellishment is in some way relating to the masculine principle?

V: Yes, it has been instigated through that principle.

S: But originally when you were talking about the mother principle, it seemed like that was alone, that was first, or that was it—that there was nothing else around to be related to.

V: Sure, if you look at it from that point of view, as being alone. But you have to be alone somewhere. You cannot just be alone; otherwise you wouldn't be alone.

S: That just seems to go to the same old question: the feminine principle is not alone because it is somewhere, which is the masculine principle—so then what's the masculine principle?

V: No, that is not the point. The feminine principle is alone.

S: In other words, what serves as its contrast to being alone is the masculine principle?

V: Yes. Very much so.

S: Could you say something about the relationship between dharmadhatu and shunyata? They are obviously not the same thing, and it doesn't seem like shunyata is an embellishment or a manifestation of dharmadhatu. I find that a little bit confusing.

V: Dharmadhatu is space free from relative reference point. It's just space. Shunyata is the study of things from the point of view of overcrowdedness. Consequently the discovery is that you find everything apparently empty, because things are very crowded—which is the somewhat acute perception of contrast transcending contrast itself. You see through the trips of the contrast, therefore you see the reference points and contrast filling the whole universe, and you begin to see through that. You don't try to get rid of that particularly, you take the whole thing in. The result is that you find your mind is empty, which is the shunyata principle. Whereas in the case of dharmadhatu, there is no journey involved, no collecting of information, no studies—it is just a state.

S: Is there a relationship between the buddha families mandala and both masculine and feminine energies?

V: Well, the mandala is built on a ground, which is provided by both feminine and masculine principles. The ground is partially masculine and partially feminine. The activities of the buddha families are also masculine and feminine equally, at the same time.

S: Does that mean that each family has both masculine and feminine aspects?

V: Naturally, yes. I think that any kind of rules like that we might have—understanding the five buddha principles, understanding compassion, understanding shunyata, and all these big steps that one makes to discover further things, further subtleties through the inspiration of enlightenment and enlightened mind—all contain two parts within themselves. There is nothing isolated from each other particularly at all.

S: When we were talking about dharmadhatu as the feminine principle, everything was sort of lovely and alone. It was just the mother who cannot ever be had or be a lover—but by the time we get to the dakini principle, the attributes are disease, war, famine, good, birth, and death. Were these the embellishments of dharmadhatu, or something further

down the line? At one point it is just pie in the sky, and the next point it's tricky.

V: I think it depends on how you take it. Whether you regard the embellishment or makeup as a threat or an invitation. It depends on how you take the whole thing. I mean, things do exist that way, and it depends on how we take it. It's up to you, from that point of view.

S: I have a question about the unborn and bornness. Would that be anything like: if there is always now, is now always in motion? If we are always in the now, is now somehow always moving? If that is so, now is always the unbornness of the next movement of now. I can't say it—do you know what I mean?

V: Yes.

S: Is that so?

V: Well, I think that's a very tricky one, actually. Now has actually happened—or is happening, whatever. Now is happening, it is there. It is more than embryonic, it is complete—from the point of view of the first flash of perception of now. Then you begin to dwell on it, and it becomes embryonic. So we cannot really pinpoint what is now—it's both. Now is like you caught the train—and at the same time you missed the train.

S: Yeah. And for that reason it is just unbornness. Thank you.

V: Well, friends, maybe we should tentatively end here. I would like to link this study with further exploration that should take place, in terms of what we discussed becoming more experiential instead of purely metaphysical speculation. As I have already mentioned in my talk, the realization of the feminine principle can take place only through prajna and the sitting practice of meditation, which is what everything seems to boil down to.

Think very seriously about that and try to do your best. There doesn't seem to be a particularly complete discovery, complete mastery—of mistress-ing, or whatever—of the feminine principle. Nothing will be complete in any case—but something might be complete. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

Part Two

EVAM



Evam.

FROM THE PERSONAL SEAL OF CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA AND THE TRUNGPA TULKUS. DESIGN BY MOLLY K. NUDELL.

TALK 1

Generations of Astronauts

WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, fellow students. First of all, I would like to find out how many students did not have a chance to read or study the literature that was put out [*Feminine Principle Sourcebook*].* Anybody? Does that mean that everybody has done the preliminary study group? Okay.

This is an unusual situation, in that we provided some vanguard study before the seminar itself began. I am glad you had a chance to study and work with the material. That will certainly provide some kind of base, or footing—a great deal. However, what we are going to discuss is not all that esoteric and all that extraordinary, far-out, mind-blowing, and so forth. It is somewhat ordinary, to your disappointment. However, maybe you could pick up some highlights throughout the few days we have together. You might be able to find something particularly personal and real.

I would like to get to the topic right away, at this point. What we are going to study, what we are going to discuss, is the EVAM principle, as you know already. Do I have that right? Yes? EVAM? [*Laughter*] I will be working with Khyentse Rinpoche, who is my personal teacher and a friend of my root guru. Khyentse Rinpoche is in town, so I would like to also ask him for a few suggestions. We would like to work together on this topic, so that this seminar could become more potent, so to speak.

We often ignore the sense of general ground. Instead we usually try

*This sourcebook contains lightly edited transcripts of the seminar "The Feminine Principle," which appears here as part one.—Editor

to pick out the highlights. We do that all the time in our life, and that has become problematic. We have no idea of the general perspective. We say, "Oh, those general perspectives, let us leave that to the learned or the technicians." We fight constantly, stitch by stitch, inch by inch, all along. By trying to have little goodies and words of wisdom here and there, consequently we become completely ignorant and stupid. We lost track of our sky, in trying to fight for a grain of sesame seed each day.

The vision of EVAM, basically speaking, is much larger than talking about the marriage counselor's level, or the relationship between two people, or simply the relationship between sky and earth. The interesting point is that whenever we talk about relationship, we manage to reduce ourselves into just simply one louse trying to fight another louse in the crack of a seam in our shirt, which we call our home. Psychiatrists do that, marriage counselors do that, physicians do that, local gurus do that. Usually we have a problem there: whether somebody can make glamour and glory out of how to get from here to the next stitch of thread going through that seam. As one louse, could we walk over to the next louse and make friends with it? Our vision is generally absolutely cramped and so poor, so little, so small, depressingly small.

Sometimes being small could be large at the same time, of course—if you are small enough. But you are not small enough. You are not so small that you become gigantic and fantastically spacious. In this case, we are neither absolutely small nor absolutely big enough—we hold ourselves between the two. So we find ourselves being just simply lice, trying to fight. A very small-minded level. That goes on with some encounter groups, some kinds of counseling, and in inviting troubleshooters to shoot your personal problems. We missed altogether—completely!—the notion of basic vision. With the EVAM principle, we are not talking about how you can comb your husband's hair in the most Buddhistic beautiful way, so that he wouldn't complain—or, for that matter, how you can tell your wife not to cash too many checks from your mutual bank account. This vision is much bigger, greater. It is enormous, very vast, gigantic.

There are two principles, of course, E and VAM. E represents basic accommodation, basic atmosphere, which could be said to be empty or full—it doesn't really matter, that's purely a linguistic problem. Then we have VAM, which is what is contained within that vastness, whether it is full or empty. What is contained, if it's full, is emptiness; what is con-

tained, if it's empty, is fullness. Those little logics are no longer problematic. We usually start out by saying, "What do you mean to say—is there something or not?" But we are not talking in those terms. When we talk about empty here, we are not talking about the emptiness in our wallet. That kind of emptiness is slightly different than basic emptiness, which has nothing to do with poverty or mismanagement. [*Laughs.*] We are talking about basic adventure, if we could talk actively; or if we talk passively, we could call it our basic being. It depends on what way you want to look at it, the basicness of it.

That basic vastness, E, seems to be unconditioned. That is to say, unconditioned by love and hate, this and that. It is also unconditioned by good or bad, of course; that's one of the most basic things of all. You have a logical problem there. You could say, "If everything is completely unconditioned, then how could it exist as E, as basic space? How can you even say it's basic space?" True, you can't. Maybe that's it. Not even maybe—that is it. That is that, whatever.

The unconditioned also could create further conditions, unconditioned-conditions, naturally. If that happens, we have no end. We have unconditioned, unconditioned, unconditioned, unconditioned, unconditioned, unconditioned, unconditioned, unconditioned of unconditions. We go back and forth, back and forth. We are completely lost, at a loss completely. However, in this case we are not purely talking in terms of conditions being metaphysical speculation, but about the unconditioned simply as something viewed, looked at, by bottomless mind, mind that doesn't have a bottom. There is no problem of full or empty. It is obviously some state of meditation, state of awake. In other words, when we are awake, we do not have to refer to ourselves every minute, every second, or every half an hour, saying, "Now, I'm awake," anymore. We are just awake throughout the whole day. Therefore, unconditioned means not putting things into categories, but simply being and not possessing.

The metaphor is being in outer space. If you are an astronaut, for instance, and you decide to step out of the ship, you find that you are neither pulled nor pushed in midair. If you are high enough for planets, you are not falling down and you are not falling up. You are just swimming, floating in the space. You are not going to hit anywhere; you are not going to be in any particular danger. Nevertheless, there is the biggest danger of all, which is the danger that you want to hang on to

something while you are still floating. Sometimes you wish that you might have contact with the nearest planet so it could create a magnetic field for you—so you could commit suicide, crash onto that planet. At this point, we are not only talking about outer space as the greatest excitement of the Buddhist ultimate idea, particularly. We are talking about it as the closest analogy for the idea of the E principle, which is that you are suspended in air. It is extraordinarily basic.

We usually try to make sure that we do not end up in the loony bin, hopefully—or end up in something worse than that, whatever that may be. More courageous people are trying to make sure that they are getting somewhere beyond simply trying to prevent themselves from getting into the loony bin, making some kind of success beyond that level. "Now that these problems are solved, whew, I don't have to go to the loony bin anymore. That air is cleared at least, fantastic, bravo—and then I want to go further, progress further." Further what? [*Laughter*] What is going on there? It seems to be impossible. There's too much space. Fantastic space! Gaps of all kinds! If we want to get to the nearest planet, we can't even lay hands on it.

Further what? You are busy reading books, trying to get quotations. You have interviews with your teachers and meditation masters and whatnot, here and there. You take courses, of course, and you get busy, getting the whole thing rolling. But then, if you are intelligent enough and not caught up in spiritual materialism, the whole thing you have been doing—trying to hold on to something or other—just disappears. You just float along in space somewhere. You are not coming, you can't say that; you are not going, you can't say that. You are just somewhere there—you can't even say that! E! [*Laughter*] That's it.

It's very frightening. It is more frightening once you get hold of that particular understanding, so to speak—"hold," metaphorical speaking [*laughter*], just a linguistic problem we have here. But the more you see it—it is more dangerous, seemingly. And you find yourself being more frightened, absolutely frightened, petrified, terrified that there's so much space once we get into the path. And once we begin to explore ourselves, there is a lot of space, too much space. We try our best to create problems, of course. That happens in my experience working with most of you here, actually. You come to me to review your state of being and have interviews. We have done that with a lot of you people, and you are very eloquent, all of you. You begin to dig up little things here and

there. But that is not what I particularly regard as a masterpiece—it's just occupational therapy, you want to have something.

The more students get into the practice, the more space that provides. It is very unfriendly to begin with, seemingly unfriendly. The reason is that you think you are not in the position to jump in, and you still regard outer space as foreign territory. That has become problematic. Other than that, there's no particular problem. It is a matter of your concept. If you begin to think, even in the conceptual mind, that that particular space is no longer frightening, you could dive right in and swim in the space. You could swim beautifully, if you were not afraid of your environment. [*Laughs.*]

You see, an interesting point is that once you begin to get into big mind—as the Yogacharins or Zen call it, the BIG mind [*laughter*]—it extends your vision. But then, once you begin to get into VAST mind, even BIG mind is so small. At this point of our work in this particular age, so to speak, this particular year, and in the growth and aging of Buddhism taking place in the United States of America and North America at large, so to speak, people are frightened a lot these days. It is not because they are doing something wrong, but they begin to panic that they are getting into something large, something vast. It is more than just big mind, it is something large. That largeness is what we are going to talk about, what we are talking about actually, at this point.

That principle in question—E—has a lot of attributes according to the scriptures. It has been said that E is supremely unchanging, that E is basically empty, that E possesses immense power. In this case, when we talk about power, we are not talking in terms of bang-bang-bang, or the level of fistfights, for that matter. We are talking of power in the sense of how much power there is in outer space if you are an astronaut floating around in that space. There's immense vision, immense power. Your little earth is over there in your vision, in the corner of your eye, and your little moon over there that you are trying to get to becomes irrelevant. You are just floating in this big space, which is deep blue and deep black, velvet black. You are floating in that space. Occasional sunlight glancing off your hand or your shoulder corners somehow makes a certain amount of confirmation that you are still seeing the same universe and the same sun. Nevertheless, you have nowhere to relax or nowhere not to relax. You are just floating in outer space, being an astronaut.

It is interesting how the American culture of space research has

provided us more evidence about big mind—or vast mind. That is magnificent, actually. That's precisely what they have been talking about for two thousand five hundred years. They didn't have spacecrafts, they didn't have anything of that nature but they still knew how that experience would be, and they did experience that themselves. At this point, we have thirty-three astronauts in the Kagyü lineage. [*Laughter*] If that's the case, every one of them was successful; they never freaked out. They actually experienced [vast mind] and they managed to transmit their experience to the next generation. So, in fact, we are generations of astronauts—very enlightened ones, of course.

Vastness is an interesting point. Even when we feel that we are so cramped in our own space, and we are spaceless, when we are so locked in our particular relationship, particular mind, body, what have you—nevertheless, that is part of the pressure coming from the space of E that is taking place all the time with us, which is a very interesting point. I don't think I should freak you out too much at this point, so to speak. Maybe we should have some discussion. I would like to answer your questions, if you have any questions.

Vidyadhara: Don't be shy! You're in outer space. [*Siren howls.*] Young lady at the back over there.

Student: Did you say what I think you said, that people generally, that is, people in the world, generally are getting frightened because they are getting a sense of vastness? That something is permeating constantly?

V: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. So?

S: So—that's fantastic!

V: Well—

S: How do we as Buddhists deal with that? It's somehow a responsibility for us.

V: You might get frightened as Buddhists, too—much more so than the others who are frightened by getting into vaster space.

S: That's true, but we have the teachings to guide us.

V: The teachings are no longer little planets—the teachings are the space itself that you are floating in! So the teachings no longer provide you with any kind of footing, except space itself.

V: Gentleman by the wall.

S: Rinpoche, could you explain further how the sense of being locked into your own space is some kind of pressure from space?

V: That's it. Its pressure is locked in. It is in your own body trying to survive independent of space. We tend to put hundreds of paintings on our walls and we decorate our floors with multicolored carpets. We put all kinds of knickknacks, tchochkes, on our mantelpiece, and we try to entertain ourselves. But if we have none of those things at all, then we have nothing; we feel we are barren—and better we feel barren than we have too many things. The problem begins at home, as they say. Home is your body, and you are afraid of the environment.

S: Thank you.

V: Anybody over there? Shiny-headed one over there.

S: Rinpoche, you used the terms big mind and vast mind. We have been working with the notions of dharmadhatu and vajradhatu. I wonder if the term big mind and the term vast mind, for that matter, have some corollaries with that, in our language?

V: I am not completely concerned with our language. If I get trapped up in language, that's too bad. What are you trying to say anyway, my dear gentleman? Say it again.

S: Well, the term big mind is familiar from, for example, Suzuki Roshi's book.

V: Yes.

S: It's familiar to me.

V: Yes. Yes, indeed.

S: And the term vast mind is a new term to me.

V: New term to you. Yes, indeed. [*Laughter*] So?

S: And I've become familiar recently with the terms vajradhatu and dharmadhatu, and have some sense of them. Maybe there's no correlation between big mind and some of these terms that we've been working with, but I was wondering if there is?

V: Well, big mind seems to be the notion of being brave—brave and very powerful, heroic. Fundamentally, being heroic is big mind, because you can sit a lot on your zafu and all the rest of it. You have a big lung.

S: A big what?

V: Lungs. [*Breathes hard in and out; laughter*] And you have a good backbone to sit up. Those are all big minds. It's somewhat good. Having a good vocation is big mind: Jesuits have good big mind; the Pope has good big mind; maybe George Washington had big mind; maybe Lincoln had big mind. On the other hand, vast mind is somewhat question-

able. Can you make something out of that? I hope you will. Just sleep on it. Thank you.

S: Thank you.

S: Supposing that together with the feeling of fear, at one point you begin to be attracted and almost court this feeling of being lost in space. Is that the usual thing?

V: You see, the interesting thing about fear—that you are going to lose your grasp, your magnetic field that comes from all kinds of planets—is that it is part of the entertainment, part of the passion. You don't want to be there in that particular vast space anymore, so you have suspicion and a sense of possible boredom. Although at that particular time you are occupied, you have possible boredom taking place.

S: But supposing you get attracted to the idea. Is it just entertainment?

V: Well, everything is idea, everything is ideal at this point. You want to complain because you are delighted, actually. You are delighted to have something to complain about. You know, that kind of situation. There's nothing we can hang on to there, particularly. It's just that a little, little breeze comes along and tells you little whispering things in your ear, and you come up with all kinds of ideas. You are trying to execute them, and then they go away. So you feel, once more, vast. You have lost your space, your inner space, so you float along in outer space once more. It goes on all the time. [*Laughs.*] It's quite exciting, but nevertheless, it is disheartening. You thought you had found something, a little butterfly coming in the middle of space, outer space—ah!—but it turns out to be a reflection from the glass window you have—phew! [*Laughter*]

You cannot win over space, it is too vast. That's why you put little tchochkes on the wall, on the mantelpiece, to protect yourself from being lost in space. But you are not ever actually lost, you gain space—actually, you gain a lot of things, but not particularly any space.

S: So is this E, this vast space, any different from the mind which perceives or experiences it?

V: Not different. It is mind. When you experience your own mind, it is vast. But when your mind has begun to be used as a tool to understand something else, then it's different—that is big mind, or maybe little mind. When you begin to understand, to realize your own mind, it is too vast. It is too close to home; that's why you might freak out. It's very close to home.

S: It seems that when it gets that close to home, being frightened is almost like a defensive unwillingness to make friends with the space?

V: Absolutely. Yes. Tell everybody about that. [*Laughter*]

S: But it doesn't—

V: They may not understand, but tell them.

S: It seems to be stuck.

V: No, lost in space. You can't get stuck in space. [*Laughter*]

V: That young lady over there.

S: Two questions, Rinpoche.

V: Yes, indeed.

S: First, did you say that VAM is contained by E?

V: What, bomb? [*Laughter*]

S: VAM.

V: We are going to discuss that later, tomorrow maybe.

S: Okay. Then the other question: in vast mind, is there an experience, or an awareness of self, in vast mind?

V: That is part of the whole thing. If there is an experience of self as such, usually you create a little pouch like a kangaroo—you could put your little babies in your little pocket.

S: That wouldn't be vast mind.

V: Not having that—that is why the whole thing turns out to be so challenging and freaky and impossible. The personal experience of recording anything back is not happening, so you might think your system has broken down or something. Then you freak out. That's one of those things that happens. You see what I mean?

S: It sounds like a shame.

V: Shame? Well, of course. Then what do you want to do?

S: It is a shame that you would freak out at that point.

V: What's the opposite of shame? Please.

S: Joy.

V: Joy. Joy is the opposite of shame? [*Laughter*]

S: I don't know. What's the opposite of shame? Pride.

V: Yeah, more likely pride, actually.

S: Arrogance.

V: Arrogance. Yes. Absolutely. [*Laughter*] So you see, the opposite of shame is arrogance, which is equally shameful.

S: [*Laughs*]

V: Even joy is shameful. We do not actually want to relate with

anything that's going on. We want to hang on to this, to that, that little trinket, this little tchochke, this little image—which are called theistic problems, on the whole.

S: Hanging on like that, then there can't be the experience of vast space.

V: It is amazing that America was actually able to take the journey, that American astronauts were able to take a journey into outer space. It's quite magnificent, but they did. And the reason they did was because they regarded themselves as human beings rather than religious people. Because of that, they had some kind of buddha nature in them that could actually relate with that kind of space. I heard reports that afterward they became spiritual this's and that's and all kinds of things happened. But there was some kind of sanity experience of the actual demonstration, or visualization, of outer space—how that could actually manifest your mind in real living, which is a very interesting point. Maybe we missed the point of your question. Have we? In outer space somewhere?

S: Thank you.

V: Would you like to say something more?

S: I was wondering, I wanted you to confirm my own idea [*laughter*] of whether there could be those two things at the same time: the hanging on and the experience of vast space. You say the result of that is freaking out, and I can understand that.

V: Well, let's sit and practice and find out that way, rather than me fortune-telling you at this point. Okay?

S: Thank you.

V: You're welcome.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I think at this particular time and space [*laughs*] we should stop. It is getting earlier already so we might be ahead of time tomorrow. Thank you.

And, once more, welcome to this particular seminar. I would like to encourage you people to sit a lot, practice a lot. Without that, we cannot actually communicate, we become foreigners to each other. So if you don't work with that basic discipline, there is nothing happening between us. Let us not regard this seminar as a circus scene, but a real working practice situation. I'm sure you can do that. Thank you very much for being very patient tonight.

TALK 2

Vajra Question Mark

GOOD EVENING. Where did we leave off last night? Somewhere. No reference point. You might find that it is very difficult to pick up—but somewhat, very interestingly, when you leave things without a reference point, that is much more precise. Because there is no reference point to pick up, the next situation is not conditioned by anything at all. You just come out and launch in, so to speak, which is tonight's issue. And that issue will go on during our entire seminar.

The interesting point about what happens in that particular type of outer space we were talking about last night is what? That seems to be it—it is what. There are a lot of different ways to say what. You could say it from the point of view of panic; you could say it from the point of view of satisfaction; you could also say it from the point of view of hunger or uncertainty. But with this kind of what, if there is no space, you cannot say what anymore. Once the space is provided to say what, what is that? Some kind of clear perception begins to dawn in the midst of that gigantic vast space. It becomes very real, very powerful and open, but at the same time, dynamic, equally. That is what we are talking about as the second principle, VAM.

Unconditional space gives birth to unconditional question—what? Somewhat you could say you couldn't care less what that is all about—but still you will say what. It is like the traditional idea of mantra—first utterance. There is a vajra carved out of a diamond floating in this gigantic space, outer space, glinting lights all over. Or, for that matter, you could say there is a question mark carved out of diamond floating

in the midst of space. But whatever it is, it is made out of diamond, indestructible.

In order to cope and work with such situations as the vastness and openness of that particular space, one has to develop—one has to have rather than develop—a greater sense of indestructibility. The notion of indestructibility is not so much that you actually asked the question, "What?" It takes the form of a question, but it becomes a statement rather than a question. But it still has the essence of yearning, openness, possibilities—open possibilities of course—that which we call compassion. Indestructibility and a sense of softness, or warmth, put together is the essence of VAM. We have a sense of directness and indestructibility, and a sense of openness that doesn't stand for any kind of germs or dirt.

In that journey of E and VAM together, any element of native germs does not survive anymore. It is not necessarily that the atmosphere is too pure and clean, but the atmosphere is unyielding. The atmosphere developed in such a way that the situation doesn't accept any form of anything whatever: there is no room to be feared, no room for claustrophobia, no room for cowardice or localized pride. Any conventional approach is not applicable. You wouldn't take the journey at all, if you were in that particular condition, of course.

That notion of indestructibility also contains an immense sense of joy—bliss, if you would like to call it that. But in this case, we are not talking about a happy, yippee, kind of joy. That is localized joy, conventional joy, joy from the point of view of one planet's concept. In this case, we are talking about joy or bliss being beyond any context; therefore, it is completely total. For instance, if your car is partially damaged in an accident, you will still think in terms of getting it repaired. But if your car is totally wrecked, absolutely wrecked, you just give up, which is some sense of relief. It also contains a kind of joy, so it's not a terrible disaster, particularly; a sense of relief comes along with it. I hope you know what I mean. [*Laughter*] There's a sense of relief, a sense of freedom, free from a certain burden. Whereas if your car has a dent here and there, you have to take it to the body shop, you have to pay money and all the rest of it. That's more of a burden. But the whole thing is completely gone, completely wiped out, so it is a different experience. Totality of some kind is taking place there. That kind of joy, bliss. Such joy doesn't have to be maintained. You simply go to the insurance com-

pany and claim the money. It is as simple as that—if you have a good policy, of course. [*Laughs.*] That kind of relief is not particularly relief as such, but a sense of totality, of course.

The notion of totality is based on the idea of nonclinging. If there is a sense of space around you already, then the notion of totality is obviously there; whereas if there is no sense of space, lostness in space, there is not. If you are without an umbilical cord attached to your mother earth anymore, then a real sense of space begins to take place. We are talking in this case about journeying out into space, without telecommunication to relate back to mother earth, so to speak. You have freedom to do what you want, what you like—but you also have freedom to land, to come back to your world and work with your fellow people.

At a certain point, pain and pleasure become one. An immense dynamic situation takes place at that very point. That is what is known as the VAM principle, mahasukha, great bliss. This concept of great bliss does not mean that you are completely exasperated in tremendous fantastic joy—like a grain of popcorn in a little container that gets cracked dead, with its own grinning smile coming all over its body. You might think that is somewhat funny, but I'm afraid people think that way. People think that great joy means that you become completely dead and rigid and frigid with a gigantic smile—and you can do it eternally! [*Laughter*] That is a popular notion of spiritual bliss, actually, from the materialist's point of view, of course.

This VAM also contains the sense of essence, and possibilities of giving birth. It contains semen, egg, sperm, seed, what have you, yeast, whatever metaphors might be visible or appropriate. It is a tremendously dynamic situation where you are not afraid or hesitant to sow further seeds anymore. And once you begin to sow seeds, your seed becomes a dynamic one. It begins to present itself naturally, very simply. So you give further birth to space and the contents of space, simultaneously. You are giving birth to further solar systems, further planets of all kinds. You are not afraid of that at all.

In relating with this situation, if there is any localized notion, pressure does not come from inside, particularly, but from outside. You begin to create a big blast, "keeoh!" [*soft explosive sound*]. If you are not willing to accept the space, and instead hold on to your territory, then space will organize the ultimate blast to break those shells. Some people call that vajra hell, in the tantric tradition; others call it damnation, what have

you. Nevertheless, holding on to something is being made into a mockery. You cannot hang on to anything, particularly. When you begin to do that, you are made into a fool, an absolute fool. So suicide is achieved by trying not to commit suicide. The sense of being suicidal is achieved by trying not to commit suicide but to preserve territory. That's the interesting point. It is a motto. Natural suicide takes place when you are not trying to do so. Very sad—very, very sad. Too bad.

I shouldn't say too much. I want you to think about what we have discussed. Maybe, at this point, we could have a discussion, if you would like to contribute with questions.

Student: Is this experience the vajra-like samadhi, or is it more like a nyam, a temporary experience?

Vidyadhara: We are not talking about an experience, we are simply talking about what it is, at this point. We are not particularly talking about path. We are talking about what it actually is. We haven't discussed the path concept yet. . . . Anybody else? Oops!

S: Is the vast space equivalent to nonduality?

V: Basically it is, but somehow I did not like the way you asked the question. [*Laughter*] Where are you? It sounds as if you are trying to put things into pigeonholes, if I may say so. We are not trying to create a dictionary here—though we would like to do so eventually. We are not trying to put things into neat compartments. Thank you, anyway. That's a very useful contribution. . . . Over there?

S: When you mentioned that unconditional space gives birth to unconditional question, are you talking about question in the sense of total, unconditional confusion, or the issue of what? That question?

V: It is the nature of the question, rather than the issue. Issue is just, "poof!" It's very simple. You might have a very serious issue, "When do I see you again?" But the nature of the question is different than the issue, actually, if you can separate the two things. That is an interesting point. What we are talking about is the nature of the question from the point of view of how you actually ask your question, rather than what you say. You may say, "Is there another cup of tea left for me?" or "Is somebody next door?" or "Is there going to be another sunrise tomorrow?"—anything. Here, the point is the manner and style in which you do it. What? Say what?

S: I was wondering about a way of perceiving ourselves on the path.

If we are involved, say, in Buddhism, there's a possibility of space there that can accommodate both our failures and mistakes. I was contrasting that with the sense of paranoia, that we have to pay attention to detail, that you spoke about yesterday in the sense of the louse crossing the thread. I was wondering if that sense of space, of our perception of ourselves on the path, is what you are talking about in EVAM—or is that some sense of indulgence?

V: Anything you want to believe. [*Laughter*]

S: [*Laughs.*] Thank you.

V: At this point, everything's open. I want you to float, so to speak—and become real by floating, rather than become love-and-lighties, particularly, of course not. However, the choice is yours, sir. That's it. Anything you want to believe. Anything you want to do? It's yours! It's your seminar. I'm just a mere push button here. [*Laughter*] You get the picture. That's it! [*Laughter*]

S: [*Laughs.*] I got it.

V: Oops. Been getting the wrong people at the wrong time. [*Laughter*] Doctor over there, physician—of some kind. [*Laughter*]

S: Rinpoche, I was wondering if you would say a few more words about the VAM concept, in relation to its indestructibility and unyielding quality, and then the softness or openness that it also seems to have—

V: —at the same time.

S: At the same time.

V: At the same time. Sweet and sour at the same time. It is like the question of space. You cannot destroy space, but at the same time, space is very accommodating, nevertheless. Space also kills you, it is very uncompassionate—but at the same time, it is very accommodating, nevertheless. The essence of space is the VAM principle, which is put together with the vastness of space, the E principle. So the VAM principle is nothing other than space. VAM is the particular attributes that exist within the E principle. VAM becomes the manifestation of the characteristics of space.

S: When you were talking about the VAM principle then, you were talking about both the E and the VAM together, the softness and the unyielding.

V: E's expression. E's manifestation is VAM. E is just the vastness of it, basically. That's it. Full stop. But beyond that, qualities exist. We could talk about the light and brilliance of the sun, or about the destructive

qualities of the sun. The sun also produces creative principles. You know, that's kind of saying the same thing. Nevertheless, that's an interesting twist in our state of mind. Usually we want to relate one situation with one thing, another situation with another thing, because we would like to split things, usually. But in this case, we cannot. We cannot at all. We have to relate with That, which is everywhere, so to speak—not to become too religious. [*Laughs.*] It is everywhere because it has its own expansion, everywhere because it is active everywhere at the same time.

S: Would that relate to compassion in any way, that softness?

V: Yes. Accommodation, of course, definitely so.

S: Thank you.

V: Ruth, are you still waiting?

S: Last night we were talking about space, this vast space which was filled with terror. And we made a great leap tonight into this combination of the journey of E and VAM coming to the point where pain and pleasure are one, into the great bliss. But it is not very clear how the terror turned into bliss.

V: Well, you see, what we are doing here is trying to point out the highlights. What could happen. What might happen. It is a question of presenting. I could come up with a piece of something with joints, and another piece with joints, which might not speak because it's been well oiled. It is your job to join those two pieces together. The puzzle-work is left to the students actually, at this point. I don't want to be mysterious about that, but I think you could give more thought to what's been said in connection with this idea of joints, joining things, putting it together. How we could make things work, and make a robot out of that—make a Buddha out of it, or a Christ out of it, whatever have you. So the subtleties seem to depend on you, actually. I don't want to go to great lengths, how you could be so subtle. That would be very dangerous, teaching you a new game, which would be fundamentally deceptive and destructive at the same time. So I would like to leave it up to you people here to at least figure out what's going on. [*Laughter*]

Well, friends, I think we are getting rather early already. Maybe unless there is some announcement—any announcements? Okay. Well, have a good sleep, and a good dinner if you haven't had one already. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

TALK 3

Missing the Boat

THANK YOU FOR BEING PATIENT. I would like to continue with what we discussed previously. At this point, we are beginning to set out the basic pattern of the whole thing, the concept of E and VAM altogether. We have laid out the groundwork of the E principle and the VAM principle, somewhat, and how we can actually relate with such vast mind to begin with, once we begin to realize how vast, enormous, the basic area that style of thinking, known as Buddhism, covers. It covers an immense area altogether—vast.

The introduction to this particular issue has been somewhat vajrayana oriented over the past two days, of course. And now, hoping and thinking that you people have had some groundwork and that some understanding has taken place already, that you studied and so forth—in turn, I feel myself somewhat relaxed in presenting the material at this point. However, having presented the basic ground, basic map already, we must come back, so to speak, to reality. E is the accommodation, the container, and VAM is what is being contained in the situation—personal experiences, domestic, physical, psychological, metaphysical, what have you. So tonight I would like to backtrack, so to speak, from tantric "hoo-highs" of all kinds. The tantric presentation is interestingly inspiring; nevertheless, it is not all that practical, shall we say. [*Laughs.*]

Here we are, back to square one, in spite of glory possibilities, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. However, the EVAM principle can be approached on several levels, so to speak: the foundation level, the level of activities, the level of greater magic and powerful subtleties. These levels

are divided into the three principles of hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana. These three sections are not actually divided, but they come along that way, like infanthood, teenagerhood, and adulthood. Those stages are not actually divided, although we decide to do so by labeling people in a certain way; nevertheless, it is a natural growth that takes place. From that point of view, there are no sharp points per se; nevertheless, there's a sense of a basic growing process taking place on this journey, the three-yana journey.

In this particular seminar, we are going to view things from the EVAM principle's point of view, which is exactly the same as what we have discussed before. I'm afraid we are not going to discuss anything particularly new or extraordinary. The magic has been told already in some sense: that we have to sit a lot, practice a lot, study a lot, develop devotion, develop a sense of humor, and all the rest of it. And over all, we have to overcome spiritual materialism! So that's it! [*Laughter*] I'm sorry to disappoint you; however, it's better to be good than worst. [*Laughter*] Better to be honest rather than hypocritical.

The hinayana level of the EVAM principle we could find in the hinayana sutras. There is a saying at the beginning of each of these sutras that is translated into the English language as, "Thus I have heard." That saying creates five types of situation: (1) "Thus" is the teachings; (2) "I" represents the student; (3–4) "have heard" is the proclamation of the dharma in a particular space and time: spring, summer, winter, autumn, or whatever; and (5) "Thus I have heard" is heard from the teacher, of course, which is another element, the teacher. So there is the teacher, the teaching, the time and place the teachings are being taught, and the student. That makes five situations. Those five—the nature of the teachings, teacher, time, place, and situation where the teachings are provided, that is to say, the student—are in the Sanskrit beginning of all the sutras, *Evam maya shrutam* [lit. Thus-by me-was heard], "Thus have I heard." The teachings cannot begin without mentioning the words E and VAM. E is the situation where teachings are being taught; VAM is the teaching actually taking effect on individuals, personally. So it becomes a real thing: personal and absolutely real at the same time.

In the hinayana level of teaching, there are two levels of discipline taking place: renunciation and discipline. Renunciation and discipline are the two basic hinayana principles, renunciation being E and discipline being VAM, at that point. When we talk about renunciation, we are not

particularly saying you should leave your mommy and daddy behind, and you should rush into India or Thailand or the North Pole. And it doesn't necessarily mean that you should say, "Fuck America! I will find something better." [*Laughs.*] Renunciation is very subtle. To begin with, a lot of uncertainty, of course, and a lot of pain and dissatisfaction of all kinds takes place. But within that dissatisfaction, which is usually based on anger and resentment of all kinds, you are pissed off at the world that you were trained and brought up in. That is precisely the basis for the propagation of hippiedom that developed lately.

Until a few years ago, hippiedom was a very popular movement, of course, as a reaction against any kind of setup, a reaction against any kind of personal, business, economic, or social interaction with the world. A reaction against that general world that has been trying so hard to relate with the public, how we could live together in housing developments, city developments, social welfare developments, and what have you, public broadcasting systems, pension systems, all kinds of situations. You begin to feel all those programs are somewhat claustrophobic, so claustrophobic. The more pleasure is presented to you, the more painful it is. You prefer to wear rags rather than silk, prefer to wear dry twigs rather than gold and diamonds; as opposed to having a nice hairdo, you prefer to have shaggy, lice-infested, matted long hair. That's not particularly renunciation, that's reaction, that's aggression. That is protest rather than livelihood, actually. It is a temporary thing. I think so, actually, quite possibly. Of course, you have a better judgment of this, since you have had those reactions yourselves. I never grew matted hair myself; I'm just observing the whole thing, what's been happening, as a commentator. If you could excuse my saying so, I could actually comment on what's happened. I have great confidence! I think I'm right!—if I may say so. [*Laughter*]

From the hippie's point of view, we don't have to conform to anything. Hippies feel that if you join a particular tradition, they will tell you to work hard—so you should try to avoid that. That is, you could work spontaneously and get the same effect by doing something else. What is that? Doing something else, what is that? Of course, taking LSD, smoking pot, what have you. Sniffing cocaine is lower level somewhat, in terms of the drug world, but LSD is held in high esteem. There's a book written about the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and that whole thing, of course [*The Psychedelic Experience,* by Timothy Leary], that taking LSD is

supreme, the buddha of drug power. It's interesting how renunciation can be built at the beginning, from that level.

All of those things are not regarded as a waste of time, of course. If that particular culture were not here, you wouldn't be here at all; otherwise, none of you would be here. I would be speaking to an empty hall at this very moment if none of those things had happened. I wouldn't be here and you wouldn't be here, for that matter. Nevertheless, the interesting point is that we begin to shed constantly, again and again, and again, and again. That shedding process takes place all the time. But we begin to realize that that occupation no longer has a sense of renunciation. Giving up your life is not renunciation; abandoning your wife or husband, your kids and your house, selling your things, giving up and running off to somewhere else is not particularly renunciation. Real renunciation is to regard all those things that you have been doing as really bleak. Nothing will actually give you up, unless you give up altogether.

In your real life, you might have the same situations happening again and again. Relatives hover around you; your friends hover around you and offer drugs and all kinds of entertainments, all kinds of things, this and that. You could fill your schedule completely. But underneath all that, you might feel the whole thing is completely bleak, absolutely bleak—very bleak. The only thing that is vivid is the possibility of death and the real possibility of going crazy, losing track of things. Whew! Real bleak situations, real bleak situations in the real, real, real sense! [*Laughter*] If you know what I mean. [*Laughter*] It's not just that you are kidding with things—it is a really bleak situation. [*Vidyadhara smiles; laughter*] Nothing seems to work. All our gadgets, purchasing extraordinary motorcars, or trying to be rustic and rugged and buying a bicycle, beginning to wear overalls or dressing up in suits. You could try higher levels or lower levels of all kinds—nevertheless, the whole thing is completely bleak. The other day, when I spoke to quite a famous pop singer, she happened to say precisely that: she feels the whole thing is bleak, that she is kidding herself. That seems to be an interesting point, actually. Somehow, it tends to fit that particular pattern: that the more successful you become, the more bleak you feel—and also, the more unsuccessful you feel, that much further bleak! [*Laughter*]

It is interesting how bleak we feel, how we feel we are so minimum, absolute minimum. Nothing is happening, cosmic frigidity of some kind. We do not see the space that goes with that, actually. It seems that we

are too concerned with bang-bang-bang, and this and that relationship alone, all the time. We forget the rest, beyond the eye level—the other hundred and fifty degrees, or whatever have you. We forget that. If we watched that general degree, we would see that there is immense vast space there, in spite of our little bleak pinhole. But that's just symbolism: the rest, the whole thing, is empty. It is E, completely vast space. That's the notion of renunciation.

Renunciation is not so much that you should give up smoking cigarettes, stop wearing shoes, or try not to wear earrings or lipstick, or not say hello to anybody you don't know. Or, for that matter, not to put your finger in your nose. [*Laughter*] Renunciation is not so much just giving something up, like a New Year's resolution. It has nothing to do with New Year's resolutions. Renunciation is a total lack of possibilities, complete bleakness. We begin to feel that. If you were not a real believer in the buddhadharma, you would never feel that way. It's real, the real personal experience of actual bleakness. There are no possibilities of improvising anything at all from your own resources, your own hypocrisy, anymore at all—other than the dharma.

The dharma comes like a second layer, beyond bleakness. It is somewhat rich; nevertheless, it is not going to save you particularly, at all. It is an interesting point: life is completely empty, whether you live in the Orient or the Occident. Whatever life you lead, it is always bleak, always meaningless. It is always changing—constantly! You're about to get something together, or you are about to click into something—miss it! [*Laughter*] You missed the boat. All the time you missed the boat. All the time. Whew! Always miss the boat, always. Have you ever caught the boat? [*Laughter*] You might say, "I did for a moment, but then I missed it." [*Laughter*] Missed the boat, constantly.

That particular principle of E is very bleak—needless to say again and again. It's very personal, absolutely personal, very seriously personal. That personal bleakness brings individuals into buddhadharma. The basic point seems to be that there is nothing you can actually hang on to personally at all. Because of that, there is a problem usually created by the theistic Judeo-Christian tradition, of course, saying that if you are in bad shape somebody will come along to you and say, "Hello, how are you?" Somebody will come along, an agent of God, who will save you from that. The vicar's wife or the vicar himself or Christ himself or messengers of God, archangels of all kinds will come along to you and save

you and encourage you, keep you company. They will keep you company, and they will be proud of being bedfellows. If you don't mind, they would like to sleep next to you, next to your bed, and they are willing to feed you with bottles and give you candies. They would be willing to turn on the television if necessary—the good channel with the good message, of course. Whew! That is an interesting point. I'm sure to a lot of people this is a sore point, of course, but I personally take delight in that particular sore point. I feel that we have nothing to lose and nothing to gain here, particularly. My concern is just purely to tell the truth. [*Laughter*]

The notion of loneliness, therefore, could not come from being babysat by different spiritual levels: the vicar's wife or the vicar himself, Christ himself, or God himself coming along to you and making you bedfellows. You still find the whole thing to be purely mind's duplication, nevertheless. So the Buddhist approach to loneliness and the E principle at this point is definitely the idea of the nonexistence of God. A lot of my Tibetan friends warned me, telling me I shouldn't say the whole thing: "You shouldn't talk about the whole thing. Why don't you just be nice to them and tell them half of the truth?" But I personally feel that that's not the way I should approach it, and now here we go. It is a very natural and ordinary situation, where you can tell the truth. And the truth only comes from the experience of reality, the absence of God, from personal experience, how we relate with reality. [*Siren blares.*] That's a good one! [*Laughter*] It's made by man. Personal experience makes it more bleak, more lonely.

Human beings usually feel much better if there is a conceptual, philosophical figurehead of some kind. With some kind of ghost worship, you feel much better. If I drop dead, my ghost will tell me what to do about it. If I'm about to drop dead, my ghost will tell me how to not drop dead. If I'm about to drop dead, my ghost will warn me so I can avoid the whole thing and lead my life. Believing in mysterious forces does not bring real bleakness at the hinayana level—that you have no place, no room, that you are in the vast charnel ground completely, altogether, and there's no place for a savior or the notion of being saved at all, absolutely not at all. [*Laughs.*] You feel delighted, because you don't have to relate with relatives anymore. [*Laughter*] There's a real sense of genuine freedom—and at the same time, genuine paranoia, of course. There is nobody to help you, which is terrible, absolutely ghastly, petrifying;

nevertheless, it's delightful. For the first time, you realize nobody will mind your business. You can conduct your own business, whether it is ill or well, whatever. Hinayana's approach to E is that.

If you have any questions, you are welcome. Thank you.

Student: You were talking about bleakness and aloneness, and in one sentence you mentioned that we forget the space. Does that come later in the talks?

Vidyadhara: You forget the space?

S: You said that we forget the space. We look through a pinhole, rather than see all the degrees.

V: Well, usually we start by looking at a pinhole, then you come to it much later. So we can't switch those roles at all, at this point.

S: I don't understand what effect seeing the space has on the bleakness.

V: Emptiness?

S: On the bleakness.

V: Seeing the whole thing is very bleak. [*Laughter*] Yeah.

S: It's even worse than just seeing it through a pinhole?

V: Yes. [*Laughter*] You got it! . . . Anybody else?

S: Today was the first day you talked about time, that time had an essential part in learning the dharma. And you also said that E was related to renunciation and VAM to discipline. How does time fit into that situation?

V: Take time with the renunciation; and also take time with discipline. What else? What do you mean by time, anyway?

S: Well, that's why I was—I found that there was a very conspicuous absence of you talking about how—

V: Are you talking about time as initials or time as a word?

S: Time as what?

V: Initials.

S: Initials?

V: Yes, which stand for something else, or else time as a word, vocabulary. [*Spells out*] T-I-M-E.

S: [*Groans: Oy-oy-yoy; laughter*] I meant, I meant time . . .

V: As a word.

S: I guess as a word.

V: Rather than initials.

S: I was hoping that it would stand for something. You know, you talked about space. [*Laughter*]

V: Yeah.

S: You talked about space, and to me, space and time are very, very closely interrelated.

V: Space and time, sure. What's the problem? [*Laughter*] Is there any problem?

S: No. There isn't really a problem. I was just wondering why you avoided talking about time until today. You said that time was related to learning the dharma, but it didn't seem to relate at all to the previous principles you were talking about.

V: Well, time comes along if you have space. That's one of the interesting points about theism and nontheism. In the theistic approach to space and time, time comes first and space comes later. But in a nontheistic approach, space comes first and time comes later, because we don't have to try to prove who did the labor or created this world anymore. The world is made by itself, naturally, very simply. That's it. That seems to be one of the basic differences, you know. Do you understand?

S: I think so. Thank you.

V: That's it.

S: Rinpoche.

V: Yip! [*Laughter*]

S: [*Laughs.*] Would you say that—

V: I wouldn't. [*Laughter*]

S: [*Laughs.*] How do you know? You haven't heard what I was going to say.

V: [*Laughs.*] That's why! [*Laughter*]

S: [*Laughs.*] Well, now I'll say it and we'll see. Would you say that some experience of the phenomenal world, or your experiences as your companion, is an experience of the bleakness?

V: What you mean by companion?

S: Well, that's a direct experience. You just simply have a flash of your experiences as your companion. I mean you have some kind of flash of that experience. Is that related, somehow or another, to that sense of bleakness?

V: I don't think so. You're creating and collecting more buddies if you do that. [*Laughter*] I'm afraid so, George. [*Laughter*] It will never work.

S: God, I thought I had it! [*Laughter*]

V: Never work. [*Laughs.*]

S: Well, I can't thank you for that. [*Laughs.*]

V: Condolences. [*Laughs*]

S: I didn't hear you, I'm sorry.

V: Whatever. Good luck, George. Very sad. [*Laughter*] Yes?

S: In another way of talking about renunciation, you seemed to say that it was something that you do. And in the way that you're talking about it tonight, it's something that you discover. At least that's the way I understood it. That sort of means that it's always there, but you discover it at some point. Is that what you meant?

V: You do it and you discover it at the same time. It's like being pushed into a corner. Do you understand? You are pushed into a corner. So you are being pushed into a corner and you do it that way. And you are pushed into the corner at the same time by life.

S: By life, yeah.

V: It's very, very hard, but it's very spacious and very freaky at the same time. When people begin to realize possibilities of renunciation, it's very freaky, extraordinarily freaky. People begin to feel they lost their whole being, which is good. That's what it is all about, really. And they begin to feel they can't play the same games anymore; they can't create their same opulence or dictatorial conmanship of all kinds anymore, at all. You begin to face your real, good old life, whatever that may be. It is bad news; at the same time it is fantastic good news in the long run. That's how the whole thing goes. [*Laughs.*] It's somewhat depressing, but it's very exciting, nevertheless. Depressive-exciting. So at some point, depression becomes excitement, when you begin to wake.

I think we could have one more last questioner. Gentleman by the wall over there. Just wait.

S: Is there something that retards that process, or that has to do with the process of finding yourself in the corner?

V: I think I should leave it up to you. I can't tell you how to go about it. Everybody's experiences are different. Each time, it's absolutely different. Good luck, sir.

Thank you. Tonight you should get a good sleep. Thank you for being very patient, waiting. We were just trying to get away from this very magnificent banquet we had for Khyentse Rinpoche. We just came out of that and I'm full. And, hopefully, I will share with you—I did share with you this particular talk, however. Well, goodnight.

Tomorrow is to be a sitting practice time, right? I would like to push further the fullness that we have been talking about. If you personally want to understand and realize what we are doing, you will have no understanding at all if you don't sit! That's the flat truth, the real truth. You should be able to understand what we are doing and what you are doing with our relationship, particularly in terms of the teachings and the examples of the teachings that are transmitted through generations and generations. People have understood themselves, realized themselves, by the sitting practice of meditation.

So tomorrow we have a somewhat modified nyinthün taking place. If you would like to understand what we are discussing, it would be very useful to sit. And also, we would like to reduce the density of spiritual pollution, which is known as spiritual materialism. If there's no sitting practice involved, there's no real cleaning up process taking place. So I would like to invite all of you, if I may say so, to take part in sitting practice—tomorrow's organized nyinthün practice especially. Please pay heed to this. I would be more than grateful if you would go along and do that. And we may have more things to discuss after that, in the three further talks that we have. So by sitting, you might have more understanding of what's been happening, and that will make our personal communication much more open. Thank you. Good sleep! Good nightmare! [*Laughter*]

TALK 4

The Chicken and the Egg

THE OTHER DAY we were talking about the E principle from the hinayana point of view, the first noble truth level of bleakness and so forth. Tonight we might discuss the VAM principle connected with the hinayana tradition, which is that out of the bleakness, some manifestation of reality begins to take place. That is equally bleak, confusing, and painful—in the same way as the E principle of hinayana. Confusion and pain begin from the point of view of the possibility of losing territory: usually unhappiness occurs because we begin to feel that we might lose our territory, we might lose our world, so to speak. Consequently, we are continuously trying to reestablish ourselves. We are trying to have a sense of the possession of ego constantly taking place. But when that is happening, then there will be further problems, of course—the potential death of ego, and so forth. The possibility of the death of ego, which causes a lot of pain and problems, is the E principle. E is the space that is created, potential death, so to speak. Beyond that level, what to do about that, is the VAM principle, what we are going to do about those things.

According to the tradition, and in the discipline and techniques that developed throughout the buddhadharma, there is a sense of utilizing that desolateness in terms of some concrete practice. Practice is trying to match that bleakness we experience at the potential loss of ego. Meditation practice seems to be the way, or the particular point, where energy and spaciousness could be put together. The sitting practice of meditation actually brings the E and the VAM principles together. So the EVAM principle goes on throughout all three yanas, each time the

teaching is presented. It is not so much a complete E and a complete VAM; but EVAM becomes indivisible each time. That is why the techniques are bringing them together in the basic point.

In the sitting practice of meditation, we feel that there is a sense of simplicity. It is almost at the level of simpletons. The simple sitting practice of meditation, the very basic and very ordinary discipline of sitting on a meditation seat and doing nothing seems completely absurd—as if that's going to cure anything, as if that's going to do anything for you. It's very absurd. It's utterly absurd, as a matter of fact. Because of the absurdity, it has some wisdom—not even some, but lots of it. Immense wisdom goes along with that. It goes along with our general rhythm and style, how we operate, how we actually ego-center ourselves throughout the process. So that anti-ego [activity] is somewhat prescribed, that going against the ego.

In the sitting practice of meditation there is basic space, basic openness. Somehow, strangely, there is also basic uncertainty. If your discipline is completely certain and you know what you are doing, then there is no journey. The uncertainty that takes place in the sitting practice of meditation is the VAM principle. The E principle is the general attitude, the general atmosphere that is always there. Putting them together makes a complete work of art, so to speak. The desolate situation of life is brought together [with that uncertainty]. Together they present our work, our life, our existence, as being somewhat pushed into the teaching.

In the Buddhist tradition, the notion of renunciation means realizing the truth about suffering and understanding how much we have fooled ourselves. How we have been captivated by our own garbage, so to speak. Our own cobweb, our own thread, has imprisoned us constantly. And when we feel more imprisoned, helpless, chaotic, and terrible—that is the space, actually. Whether you like to believe that or not, it's a fact. The more we feel claustrophobia, the more we feel that we are completely cluttered with stuff, that we are caught in the middle of a traffic jam completely. Those kinds of little, or even big, things around us. We are being surrounded by that situation and we cannot get out of it at all. When we try to get out of such a situation, we have to produce or manufacture more stuff in order to get out of it. And that stuff in itself starts to get in the way all the time. All that is actually space, the E principle.

Because of that, we begin to look for something else, another space-type situation, other refreshing possibilities—and unable to find anything better at all, we begin to sit and practice, meditate. The practice of meditation begins to give us some perspective: that the claustrophobia is the space, or E; and the inspiration to work with the claustrophobia is the dynamic possibilities, or VAM; so E and VAM put together. The sitting practice of meditation is like that. It's seemingly quite simple, actually. It's very, very basic, extremely basic. The general principle is that there is always a container and what is contained. That is always taking place in practice of any kind, according to the buddhadharma.

Let us discuss the narrowness of the hinayana. The narrow and militant, so to speak, discipline of hinayana becomes very powerful and important. The more narrow and more disciplined you try to make things, the more you begin to have some sense of fresh air taking place simultaneously, all the time. One of the interesting points here is that contradictions make sense. Contradictions make sense unless you are telling a lie, then it doesn't make sense: you are telling a lie rather than contradictions. There's a difference between contradictions and lies. Contradictions could be facts and figures, realistic views of things as they are. Telling a lie is trying to cheat somebody, which has nothing to do with contradictions at all, actually. You are trying to go beyond contradictions, so that becomes a lie, untruth. The important point is that where there is a lot of space, that means there is a lot of claustrophobia. And a lot of energy means a lot of low energy. You can get high on the low energy, of course—in many cases, we have done that ourselves—nevertheless, it is energy, which we call depression, as a euphemism. When you are high on low energy, that is depression.

The Tibetan term for renunciation is *shenlok,* which literally means "nausea." You are completely nauseated with the claustrophobia that takes place in your life, in your ordinary basic life. Piles of dirty dishes in your kitchen sink, unmade beds, unpaid bills, unfriendly telephone calls, and friendly telephone calls. You begin to descend into dust and cobwebs completely—as if, or literally in some cases. You get phone calls or mail from people who say that they are going to kick you out of your apartment, and they are going to cut the telephone connection, and somebody is going to sue you. And if you had higher connections previously, when you felt frivolous in the early days, then one of those Mafiosi will come along and try to kill you on the spot; there's a price on your head.

It's interesting, that point of view. There's a lot of claustrophobia, and there is immense space, and lots of energy taking place in ordinary situations, at the kitchen-sink level. It is very powerful, and makes us think twice, thrice.

The sitting practice of meditation seems to be the only way we can actually bring together the notion of pain and the notion of inspiration simultaneously—sweet and sour at once. That's been done in Chinese cooking, and people find it quite delicious, as a matter of fact. In this case, it is much more than sweet and sour, actually; it is hot and cold simultaneously, freezing and burning simultaneously. Particularly when students begin to get into the practice, they begin to get burnt—but simultaneously they are being frozen. You have the frigidity of being frozen, and you have at the same time the scorching qualities of being burnt. And that seems to be the general view or general experience.

I begin to feel that myself. And in my personal experience of watching our students, I begin to see that they have the facial expressions, physical behavior, and format of being burnt and frozen simultaneously. That brings some kind of massage system. They then begin to dance, to like it. However, they can't like it too much, because once they do so, they begin to take sides, either to the cold or the hot areas. But when they feel some healthy awareness or wakefulness taking place, the hot and cold are balanced completely. So they are cooled and warmed simultaneously. All this is taking place at the hinayana level, of course. E and VAM, E being the cold and VAM being the hot, take place together at that point.

If you have any questions, you are welcome.

Student: When we understand or accept these contradictions, is it a feeling of just accepting things the way they are, rather than coming to a greater logic?

Vidyadhara: Accepting things as they are—what do you mean by that?

S: Just opening up to the situation and not taking sides, not trying to maintain a hold on it.

V: Sounds too naive for me. There's more energy than that.

S: Would you explain?

V: Accepting things as they are could be just leaving it up to the situation to work itself out. But that's not the case here. Accepting things as they are from one angle would be simply and directly experiencing with-

out any fear. You see, you could be accepting things as they are with a sense of panic. You could say, "Now this is the folk wisdom. We should be accepting things as they are. Let's cool it, cool off, just sit back and smoke our pipes in our rocking chairs." That's not quite the case here. There has to be some kind of continual wakefulness, rather than just sitting back and letting things happen on their own accord and everything is going to be hunky-dory, You see what I mean?

S: Yes.

V: It's very taut—chippy is the only word I can think of. [*Laughter*]

S: Thanks.

S: What's the relationship between EVAM and the feminine principle?

V: E is the feminine principle, VAM is the masculine principle.

S: But it sounds like one could see E as the mother aspect of the feminine principle and VAM as the dakini aspect?

V: Not necessarily. E is very tricky, it has everything. And VAM is just the mere occupants of the container, which is sometimes helpless. So the feminine principle has greater power, from that point of view. In other words, we can't breathe without oxygen, and that oxygen is the feminine principle.

S: But that can involve energy too, or manifestations of energy.

V: Well, we have to use oxygen in order to function, so to speak. So the feminine principle is life strength, the strength of life. We can't function without space. That's it. And once we have space, once the feminine principle is graciously accepting the masculine principle, then you could do all kinds of things. In this case, we are not talking about a man and woman particularly at all; we are simply talking in terms of principles. And we are not saying that women are superior or men are superior. In this case we are just talking about how the cosmos works, the mechanics and chemistries. There are two elements—the container and the contained—that interact with each other. If there's nothing to be contained, the container becomes irrelevant; and if there's not enough container for what is being contained, then vice versa, so to speak. That's the idea we are talking about here, although we have to rush a lot.

S: I'm shocked at how familiar hinayana seems. That's where I seem to be. In any case, I have been thinking about how it is not only difficult to transcend misery, but it is difficult even to acknowledge it. There is even a sense of embarrassment about it, a sense of shame. Is there a

kind of subterranean sense of responsibility, that we choose this kind of existence?

V: I think the notion is that you are still not willing to be public, so to speak. That's one of the biggest obstacles. Even at the vajrayana level, the yeshe chölwa principle of crazy wisdom is that willingness to be public. At the hinayana level, there also should be some notion of being willing to be public. We would like to keep some little privacy, so there is still the faintest of the faintest of the faintest—or maybe even a much thicker level—of deceptions taking place all the time. We really don't want to present ourselves as we are, but we would like to reinterpret ourselves in order to present ourselves to the public. Always there's that kind of translation of what you like to see yourself as, rather than what you are.

S: There's a kind of pride involved in that.

V: It is a neurotic pride of some kind, but I still think it is workable, actually. There's no particular problem; it had to break through. Obviously, there's always going to be some kind of stage fright taking place; nevertheless, you can overcome that. That's what it is all about. And actually, that idea of performance is getting into the vajrayana level, that you are performing onstage, everything is a dance on a stage. In hinayana, the point is to acknowledge that stage fright much more. Then you could overcome it.

S: Hopefully.

V: I'm sure you can do it. See what happens.

S: Rinpoche, you said EVAM is happening all the time throughout the three yanas, and then it becomes invisible. What do you mean by invisibility?

V: In-di-visibility! They become one. At each level, it is the indivisibility of E and VAM together. That happens through all the yanas.

S: And yet you can work with it, work with the EVAM principle?

V: Work with the EVAM principle? Well, hopefully. I hope so, otherwise there's nothing left. If you cannot work with your atmosphere and your body, there's nothing left for you to do, is there? No house, no body, no practice—poof! [*Laughter*] What is there left? I hope so. It has been promised in the scriptures and texts that it is workable, that the journey is the indivisibility of the accommodation and what is being contained in it working together—which we are trying to correlate with the E and VAM principles at this point. Good luck, sir.

S: I don't know about that.

V: I'm sure you can do it. . . . Shiny-headed guy over there.

S: Rinpoche, at the end of your talk, you began to describe the experience in sitting practice of burning and freezing. I think I didn't quite get it. You said that after a while the student begins to like it?

V: Well, I don't mean "like it," in the sense of indulgence, but the student begins to feel familiar with it, that hot and cold are one.

S: Is that what produces the sensation, if I understood you correctly, of transmutation from burning and freezing to warming and cooling?

V: No, no! It is having two experiences at once, which makes the whole thing indivisible. You get completely exasperated: your dualistic mind can't jump back and forth anymore, so you begin to accept the whole thing. You begin to give in. Then hot and cold are, "So what?" One thing, one taste. That's it.

S: And that presents the possibility of moving into—

V: It doesn't present even the impossibility of actually experiencing hot and cold at once.

S: Well, the balance sounds like something—

V: There's not even a notion of balance anymore.

S: Okay.

V: That's that! [*Laughter*] You see what I mean? If you begin to talk about balance, then you have presented that as like tuning your record player—which is bass and which is treble. But in this case, it is the whole thing. It's like a broken bottle, and the juice inside is running out completely, with both hot and cold at once. That's what we call a potential vajrayana mess. [*Laughter*]

S: Thank you.

V: It's quite delightful, actually. It happens at the hinayana level as well. When we begin to give in, not choosing the hot or the cold, both become one completely. That's possible. It's been done.

S: What is the relationship between hot and uncertain? You talked about VAM in terms of uncertainty and in terms of heat.

V: Inquisitiveness. Uncertainty. Not knowing exactly what's happening. For instance, if you moved into a house that was not particularly familiar to you, and you had not been there before, you would like to look into every closet, what it's all about. Uncertainty. Occupation. Problem. So?

S: So . . . you also talked about VAM in terms of being hot, and the E cold.

V: Yeah. Hot, of course, yes. Hot cannot happen if there's no cold to begin with—but you can't work the other way around. In other words, without a mother, there cannot be a son. In this case, we are saying the chicken is first and the egg is last. Finally, Buddhist tantrikas worked out which comes first! [*Laughter*] That's what we are talking about: the chicken comes first, the egg comes after.

S: Rinpoche, in breaking through stage fright, it seems that even in that commitment there is still a sense of deception, of being onstage but still playacting. How do you get to that point where you are even beyond playacting on the stage?

V: If you regard that as life. If you regard it as a performance, that's a problem. That's a problem with a lot of performing people in the theater, as well. If they don't regard that as purely demonstrating their life, they make a terribly bad performance. They begin to act. You see what I mean? It is the same thing. You are not performing for anybody's entertainment, you are performing as you are—including wiping your bottom on the toilet seat and everything. Whether you are performing in public or private, you are there. Jolly good job. [*Laughter*]

S: Rinpoche, would you say that our first glimpse of space is usually perceived as fright or boredom or depression because we tend to compare it with what we experienced before?

V: Absolutely. We don't take it seriously enough; but on the other hand, we take it too seriously—which are the E and VAM principles, hot and cold. The problem is that we don't relate with hot as actually hot, we think it might be cold. If we run our hot-water tap long enough, it might come out cold water afterward; and if we run enough hot, the cold tap might run hot. That is a kind of distrust in the chemistry that exists, simultaneously. You know, you expect the moon is going to turn into the sun, and the sun might turn into the moon if you sit long enough.

S: So it's kind of a baby's view of space?

V: Infantile, that's it, absolutely.

Well, friends, that seems to be a good way to end. I understand that tomorrow I will be here earlier, according to my friends in the administration. Good night. Thank you.

TALK 5

Small People with Vast Vision

I AM BEGINNING TO FEEL that we don't have enough time to discuss the whole thing properly; however, we could do our best at this point. Today, I was hoping that we could go through the mahayana concepts connected with the EVAM principle. One of the interesting points there is that there is some notion of problem, we could say. At the level of vajrayana, it is very clear and precise. At the level of hinayana, it is equally precise and clear because of its simplicity, its connection with reality. But at the mahayana level, there seems to be some kind of obstacle or problem, which comes from the possibility of religiosity and benevolence. The popular mahayanist view of how to conduct one's life and to organize the whole thing is based on the idea of goodness of some kind. That sometimes becomes problematic. It has become a big problem. However, we could work on that, so it is no longer regarded as an obstacle at all, by any means. The idea of goodness becomes an obstacle in certain situations. If the practitioner begins to become too involved with religion or do-goodism, that could lead into a notion of love-and-light. That seems to be the epitome of the problems of mahayana buddhism. On the other hand, it is impossible just purely to put hinayana and vajrayana together without the transition of mahayana. It would make no sense, there would be no virtue of any kind at all.

The basic point of mahayana's view and concept of the E principle is the notion of commitment, extensive commitment, and vision. Commitment means taking the vow of doing a bodhisattva's work, and vision means that there is nothing in the way between you and practice any-

more. Commitment means that you are willing to work with the rest of sentient beings, not only sentient beings who crawl and walk on this planet, particularly—your commitment is to work with the complete universe, including the billions of solar systems that exist. There is such vast vision of your being willing to work with anything there is: you are willing to work with the sun and the moon, the rest of the stars, and all the other planets that exist in the universe, beyond your imagination of vast. Those vast outer-space worlds, any kind, all kinds—you are willing to work with the whole thing completely. That particular vow and commitment tends to become very warm and very personal at some point; nevertheless, that personality is not in the way. It becomes real experience. It is complete experience when there are no limitations put on your vision, your expansion, anymore. It is large mind, gigantic, great, vast mind.

Mahayana is known for its big thinking, its larger scheme. Therefore, the scheme itself, the big thinking itself, and the commitment to that larger scheme, become real, realistic, powerful, and important. That actually tends to create a sense of feeling belittled. Sometimes you feel belittled—the vision is so big and you are so little. Your activities and your particular personal existence are so small. You might feel it is very little; you are very little. An interesting contrast takes place there. That conflict between the vast vision and the small person doing the vast vision sets off some kind of atomic bomb. Such a small person can think so big—that becomes gigantic and extremely beautiful. The little thing is the trigger, and vastness is the explosion, and that begins to work together. That's the E principle, in the mahayana tradition, basically, generally speaking. Of course, other things, such as the notion of shunyata, become important, too. But there we are not talking in terms of action; we are purely talking in terms of a state of mind that exists when a person begins to realize no form, no boundary, yet completely form, completely full of boundaries. You begin to get confused again by the boundary, or the form, and the formlessness—form and boundarilessness altogether. So some kind of explosion also takes place there.

As far as the VAM principle in the mahayana is concerned, it seems to be the notion of practicality, which is also the notion of faith. Faith here means not willing to give up, and a sense of complete joy. We could use the word "romantic," which seems to be quite kosher here—romantic meaning how fantastic it would be, how fantastic it is, that I am a child

of Buddha, and I can actually fulfill buddha activities by conducting myself in the way of the Buddha: generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, prajna, and so forth. You might have vast vision and commitment of some kind, which is the E principle, but if you don't have a personal filler, so to speak, a personal occupant of that particular vision, then that vision becomes just heroic hoo-hah that doesn't mean anything very much. It's just somebody thinking big who doesn't have any practicality—so what?

There's always a conflict with the domestic, so to speak, experience of the bodhisattva's work, which also contains the notion of great compassion. Actually, we could say the compassion aspect of the bodhisattva relates with both the E and VAM principles, simultaneously and together. The spaciousness of the compassion, the largest notion of limitless compassion, is connected with the E principle. Nevertheless, simultaneously, the VAM principle also contains a sense of softness and compassion. Compassion could be divided into two sections, as it is traditionally done: the E principle is karuna, basic compassion; and the VAM principle, we could say, is maitri, the warmth and loving, the domestic aspect of it. So you have two types of things working together, but they are indivisible, nevertheless. The mahayana principle of E and VAM put together is very pragmatic, very domestic. The hinayana principle of EVAM is very much educational. The difference between those two is like the difference between going to school, college, and having your degree already and actually working.

Vastness and potency put together again bring the notion of hot and cold together. We discussed that last night. The same thing begins again. Hot is the domestic approach of the bodhisattva's work: the paramitas, the dedication and awakening of bodhichitta in individuals. Cold is the vastness: how your world, how you, can actually radiate from this little fire to the rest of outer space with complete warmth—which is a symbol of coldness in some sense. What takes place is that when you want to radiate immense heat, you are challenged by the possibility of cold at the fringe, at the outer range of your territory, so to speak, which is an interesting point. The VAM principle becomes more and more dynamic as we go on to the vajrayana level, continuously. And the E principle becomes much more laid back, so to speak. Nevertheless, it is very important. It is of atmospheric importance to the situation, as we go through the three yanas.

Well, I don't think I should confuse you further by presenting too much stuff. Maybe we could stop here and direct questions, if you have any.

Student: The last few days you have given us a conducted tour of outer space, at least it seemed to me that way, galaxies, solar systems, beyond, and on and on. And somehow you crept into it such concepts as maitri, karuna, love, compassion. Well, they seem to have—in my scheme, let's say—nothing to do with all that you have been talking about. Those are secondary or tertiary phenomena of the world or universe, many arising from socialization, et cetera. Now, where do karuna and outer space meet? Is that maybe some kind of a sop you throw at us and say, "Well, we like to be comfortable, that is compassion. Nice. And there's love, nice." But that's not how things really are! [*Laughter*] There is none of that! There are only these energies you have been talking about. How do you bring this together?

Vidyadhara: You see, the interesting point is that you don't bring them together—it is together. We just have to click to the situation. We have been presented with all kinds of alternatives, seeming alternatives, and we have been presented with all kinds of variations of descriptions—nevertheless they all become one. You don't try to bring them together as trying to mix two things, but they are already so. It is like the notion of the fluidity and wetness of water being one. So from that principle, you do not try to bring them together. Karuna is the largest sympathetic atmosphere that we have. Space accommodates crime and virtue, pain and pleasure. If there's no outer space, we wouldn't be here at all. Space is going along and just letting us to do all these things. They are letting us build skyscrapers, build farms and wood cabins, what have you. They even let us go through that by rocket ship.

S: All manifestations of EVAM?

V: I wouldn't exactly say manifestations, but I would say it is it. That's it. That's it. Anybody else?

S: I wonder, when you talk about extending our imaginations to include compassion for beings other than those that we can see on this earth, if that's an exercise in imagination or something that we should really expect to encounter?

V: What do you mean? You mean that we might get somebody in our backyard from the flying-saucer world? [*Laughter*]

S: No, I don't really think that it's going to enter our world. I just

wonder if we're supposed to be willing to enter other worlds in any real sense.

V: Well, I have been thinking the whole thing is very basic and natural. We think that this world is gigantic, and if we buy a big property we say, "Wow, how many acres we bought!" You know, "We bought almost half the state!" Still, it is very little. The idea is that there are greater worlds that exist, and we shouldn't be too provincial, too earthly, whatever.

S: Well, when we do the chants and we talk about asuras and gandharvas and various other manifestations, are those real or are those psychological states?

V: I would say, both. The question—Is it real?—is very tricky. Actually, you know, it is even difficult to say whether you are real or I am real, whether what we are doing here is real. So the question of reality is just a matter of speculation. [*Laughter*]

S: Thank you.

S: Hello. You talked before about the hot and the cold—being in it, experiencing it, being able to be both hot and cold. Is one of the characteristic aspects of the mahayana, as opposed to the hinayana, not just being in composure in the middle of the hot and cold, but also having compassion in your environment?

V: I think so. You see, we should definitely try to make a real statement about shunyata, as well as compassion. When we talk about shunyata, we are talking about space, the basic atmosphere where things could be allowed to take place. And when we talk about karuna, compassion, it also goes into that particular area—karuna being a state of sympathetic atmosphere that you could generate, predominantly by attitude, but fundamentally by real chemistry. It is an atmosphere that exists there, that we have to sort of tune into. So the point of view of compassion in Buddhist terminology is not that we are feeling sorry for somebody because somebody is in bad shape and we feel, or try to feel, kindly to them, or that we are in the position to help them, particularly. That kind of one-upmanship or social worker's attitude, Peace Corps attitude, what have you, is not the real compassion that we are talking about. Compassion in this case is an actual atmosphere of warmth and friendliness that can take place, which is not the state of mind of an ordinary person but the state of mind of everything—both the lowest of the low as well as the highest of the high at the same time.

S: So this is what starts to bring the joy out of that, out of your feeling of being so enclosed, the compassion.

V: You got it.

S: Okay.

V: The idea of joy here, not so much that you feel great that you managed to snatch somebody's cookie [*laughter*], but joy in the sense of, we could say, cosmic appreciation of some kind that everything is delightfully so.

S: I wondered how prajna fits into this, because I had seen shunyata as being like E and prajna as being like VAM.

V: Yes. That's very clever, actually. It's true. Prajna is very basic. It is the sensitivity that exists within the space. Again, prajna cannot survive without shunyata, or the space of anything. Prajna is the inquisitiveness. Fascination in the healthy sense takes place if there's enough room left, in larger thinking.

S: Rinpoche, would you say that the samsaric condition results from ignoring the E principle, the space; and in regard to the VAM, relating to it improperly?

V: Well, I think samsaric conditions are completely the opposite of EVAM. Instead of relating with vast space, you put in your own territory to begin with; instead of working with your own energy properly, you try to fight with the space. Trying to fight with space becomes an insult. So you have the complete reverse effect there: the actual area where it should be bigger, you try to be small; the area where you should be smaller, you try to be big. You are completely twisting the whole thing, which is known as neurosis. Yeah, that's a misunderstanding, of course. It is not necessarily permanent damage, or permanent punishment, or the fall of man, or anything like original sin. It is just a complete misunderstanding, completely missing the point. Where things should be looked at as gigantic and vast, you make territory out of that, make it smaller, put a fence around it. And the area where you should try to make things smaller and compact and energetic, you try to push out, so you end up with some kind of cosmic constipation.

S: Thank you.

V: Which is samsara. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Well, friends, I think maybe time is getting younger again, so we should stop at this point. See you tomorrow. Thank you.

TALK 6

Wash Your Dishes and Take Off Your Roof

QUITE SADLY, TONIGHT—this afternoon, rather—is the last chance we have to go through the EVAM principle generally; and, quite timely, today's topic is the vajrayana aspect of that. Throughout the Buddhist approach, the process is one of trying to develop basic sanity. Several of the hinayana schools would say that the sense of developing sanity is simply not to be attached to material things. It is to see everything as created out of atoms and fractions of time put together, so we have nothing to hang on to. The more advanced-level hinayana schools would say that it is just states of mind that we tend to cling to. The mahayana schools of Yogachara would say basic sanity is a state of mind, and that mind is continuously luminous: ever-glowing clarity and luminosity take place. The mahayana schools of Madhyamaka would say that state of mind is totally empty—but at the same time, conditioned mind is also buddha nature, nevertheless, so there is hope for you. That is the process that generally evolved, as sophistication developed through the hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana levels. A lot of progress in states of further subtlety began to take place, of course.

At this point, as far as vajrayana discipline is concerned, that state of mind, basic sanity, has two constituents: mahasukha and jnana. *Mahasukha* is a Sanskrit word that literally means "great joy," "great bliss." *Maha* means "big," "great," "giant," and *sukha* means "happiness," "joy," "pleasure," "bliss," whatever. *Jnana,* again, is a Sanskrit word that literally means "primordial insight." That is to say, it is insight, under-

standing, clarity, oneness. Jnana is a state of discriminating wisdom that always occurs rather than being produced by temporary experience of any kind. It is an inherent state of being. So jnana is like outer space, which is inherently outer space. In spite of stars, moons, galaxies, and planets of all kinds; nevertheless, it is basic space. Outer space is inherently empty and inherently rich at the same time, like jnana, wisdom.

In the vajrayana tradition, as far as the EVAM principle is concerned, it is the notion of wisdom and great joy put together. Wisdom is regarded as the E principle, fundamentally. That is to say, being. Every situation we experience in our ordinary life has its basic subtleties, embryonic basic subtleties, which help allow us to express. That basic tendency, that basic format, is always there. In the tantric tradition, of course, that is often referred to as the principle of vagina—or cervix, actually—where birth is taking place, the birth of the phenomenal world. It is like giving birth to a child in that it is coming out of that particular cosmic mouth. It is not even a mouth, it is more; it is more than a gate, it is cosmic space. In vajrayana teachings, you often find it said that the Lord is dwelling in the cosmic cervix of wisdom. Because he is dwelling in that cervix, therefore, he is able to teach and to proclaim the vajrayana discipline.

In this case, we are not purely talking about sexuality, or anything to do with sexuality, particularly. That is a very small portion of it. Instead we are talking about the general principle, the vastness of the whole thing. The basic mother principle is not even female or male; it is just a basic principle that exists, which accommodates, which allows the situation to become pregnant, to be born. And also, it gives birth. Nevertheless, it contains everything—which is a different, larger state of mind than we discussed in the mahayana discipline the other day. It is much bigger than the mahayana principle in this case, much greater, in some sense. It is no longer even vision, anymore, it is just a state of being. That vastness is so. So vast, therefore it is so. That might have some correlation with the concept of shunyata, but it is nothing like the shunyata mahayanists talk about as being not this, not that, therefore everything is nothing. You don't even have to borrow the terms "form is empty, emptiness is form" anymore. It is completely total, absolute, from that point of view.

From the vajrayana point of view, the E principle, therefore, is impregnated space. We could say that space, in terms of physical space, is

also impregnated space, because it is sympathetic to everything that goes on in that space. It allows things to operate in its own space. From that point of view, we could also say it is somewhat kind space, compassionate and accommodating space, precisely. That's an interesting pun—it is accommodating space, space that accommodates everything—a vajrayana pun of some kind. Probably you don't think it's so funny, but it's so. [*Laughter*] Space is very accommodating—and often, of course, it is very frightening, too. Things seem to be a larger size than you are, as we discussed the other night in a greater version.

Why, if space is just open and accommodating, should we call it wisdom? Why wisdom? What is there about being wise? What is the idea of being wise? The concept of wise, from that point of view, is what is traditionally known as "one flavor." The Tibetan term for "one flavor" is *rochik*. *Ro* means "flavor," "taste," *chik* means "one"; so "one-flavor" experience. If you have one-flavor experience, there are two choices: you don't experience at all because it is one-flavor, your own flavor; or else you become a monomaniac. If you become a monomaniac, you just like one thing at a time. But in this case, of course, we are not talking about that monomaniacal level of one flavor, that you like only one thing, the thing, that you become a maniac about something or other. Instead, one flavor means tasting your own tongue and seeing your own eyes with your own eyes. It is where the state of mind becomes not dependent on feedback from the phenomenal world, but it contains by itself. So it is self-contained experience, utterly self-contained experience.

I hope the dakinis and dharmapalas and all these people will allow us to talk about such a thing as this. If they wouldn't, may this building collapse on the spot! [*Nervous laughter*] We are taking a chance, you know. But I feel that you have been studying already. Everyone of you has been studying and had study groups—everyone of you except one or two people who just dropped by. But still, those people are very quite safe people—who may be deaf, and hopefully will be mute, too.

Anyhow, the question of one flavor is that space makes love to itself, and space also produces children and grandchildren and great-great-great-great-great-great grandchildren—and great-great-great-great-great-great grandparents, of course. Nevertheless, space is not the origin of the feminine lineage, because it is always one thing. It is ever-present, ever-ready, ever-simple, which makes the whole thing very interesting, in some sense. Eventually the sitting practice of meditation, shamatha and

vipashyana, or shi-ne and lhakthong experience, also could become like that: self-contained experience that doesn't need, or is not asking for, a reference point anymore.

One flavor also brings the next notion, the VAM principle, which is mahasukha, great joy. Because of its one-flavorness, because of its own self-existence, because of its own self-contained situation, therefore lots of play can take place in our life, our experiences, and everything. The phenomenal world is the guideline completely, it is absolutely the guideline. There is a fundamental sign, or symbol, taking place. That often could become superstitious, of course; nevertheless, it is true, in some sense. It is like the very simple, ordinary, regular things we talk about. For instance, if you get angry with somebody and decide to walk out, storm out of his room, you are so pissed off at that person—you slam the door and catch your finger in it. That kind of situation. Sometimes it is very dramatic and vivid, and sometimes it is very subtle and ordinary. Nevertheless, those situations always take place with our life.

There seem to be no actual accidents as such, at all. Everything seems to have its own messages taking place. Why today's weather is somewhat warm. Why tonight is going to be particularly cold. Why we actually managed to get hold of this particular place to give a talk on the EVAM principle at all. Why you managed to churn up time and money to come here and do this together. Why your particular hairstyle. Why you are bald, why you have lots of hair. Why you are wearing a shirt or why you are wearing a tie—or why you are not wearing a shirt, why you are not wearing a tie. All those little situations seem to be very superstitious, when we talk about those little things. Nevertheless, there is some deliberateness taking place always.

One of the exciting things about all that is that the world is filled with magic—not from the point of view of a conjurer's trip, but magic in the very ordinary and very basic sense. How we came to be here—that our physical setup is such, our state of mind is such, our clothes are such, our way of behaving is such—is interesting. That seems to be the VAM principle: everything that exists contains great joy. It is not so much that you are having twenty-four hours of orgasm simultaneously. We are not talking about that, particularly, but about great joy from the point of view that some state of mind is here, and it is contained, and it is also is very sane and wholesome. What we are doing is absolutely wholesome, the most solid thing that we could ever have done in our life. Right now

we are doing a great job, all of us. We are doing what we should be doing—and it feels togetherness, it feels awe-inspiring, and it also feels very sacred.

We have created some kind of atmosphere, quite rightly so. We decided to put our chemistry together, you and me, and this and that. The joy, or bliss, principle is not so much that somebody is tickling you or that you are in a state of ecstasy from the effect of some chemical, or what have you. Here joy and togetherness and wholesomeness have to do with something that is naturally there, completely there, a sense of arrogance and pride without neurosis, a natural state of being, which is so.

The vajrayana principle, VAM, is often referred to as the "vajra principle." That particular vajra principle is based on the idea of indestructibility. Nothing can challenge it, nothing can actually destroy it or chip off that vajra being. It is a state of being, generally—a state of being, a state of existence, a state of reality, a state of straightforwardness, sharpness, toughness, gentleness and everything, brilliance and so forth. We begin to realize that we possess all those qualities, even though we are mere beginners in the practice. We are mere beginners, we are just mere. We can only spell—if we could read the alphabet, that would be the best. We are at that level at some point; however, we have some sense that we are associating ourselves with some basic sanity in any case.

That basic sanity is so complete. Bliss, joy, can only occur when there is a sense of complete circulation taking place, without any mishaps or outlets. In other words, nobody is stealing your energy. The energy is yours, and you are actually utilizing that particular energy in an appropriate way. You feel completely harmonious; you feel complete harmony with that particular situation, which is joy. It is quite magnificent and fantastic. Nevertheless, the E and VAM principles put together, that we would actually bring together, are not separate—they are interdependent and indivisible. Much more indivisible than your nation. [*Laughter*] Much more so, I'm afraid. It is very complete. It is one flavor, again, once more, in the indivisibility.

Three levels. The hinayana level stirs up pain and pleasure and complications. The mahayana level makes you more relaxed, more committed to what you are doing. In vajrayana, finally you are presented with the ultimate healthiness, ultimate wholesomeness, completely. It is that you are okay, so to speak, and everything is fine. If you worry, that's

great; if you don't worry, that's fine, too. All the sharp edges, the sharp corners of this and that which take place—you should let them take place in their own way. Razors have their own place, and sponges have their own place, too. So whether it's floppy or sharp, it's fine—they are the same manifestation of it. What is it? It's nothing, it's everything, it's everywhere. It is us. It is nobody. It is everywhere and it is so joyous—joyous and powerful. And also, we mustn't forget, it is very liberating. The highest mind that has ever occurred in this age and space and planet is vajrayana intelligence, which is so gentle and handsome [*laughter*], and so dignified, beautiful. That is why it is called vajra-yana, the "vehicle of the vajra."

Often this yana is referred to as the imperial yana; however, in this case, we are not particularly talking about politics, but we are purely talking about its all-encompassingness, overwhelmingness, expansiveness. Usually nobody is actually able to identify themselves with space, because we are hassled with our life. We have too many dirty dishes to wash, so we have never had a chance to look out the window even, let alone take our roof off. But in this case, the vajrayana principle is to wash up your dishes, make your bed, clean your room—and then take off your roof. [*Laughter*] That is the imperial yana. Thank you. If you have any questions, you are welcome.

Student: Could you say anything about the EVAM principle in relation to the context of devotion?

Vidyadhara: Well, I think devotion is also a love affair at the same time, which is a very important point. The indivisible experience of taking off your roof and cleaning up your dirty dishes and everything, could not occur at all, if there were no basic devotion. Devotion is somewhat claustrophobic at the beginning; nevertheless, you begin to become one with space. The object of devotion is the force that comes out of the space that we have been talking about. Without that, we can't do anything at all. Thank you.

S: Thank you.

V: Metal rim?

S: A friend of mine told me that before she went to India to practice Buddhism, she spoke to you. You had just come to this country and she asked if you had any advice—and you said to follow the pretense of accident. [*Laughter*]

V: So?

S: Is that anything like what you were talking about, the magical quality of the details of your life?

V: Your guess is as good as mine. [*Laughter*] . . . Red—and black? [*Laughter*]

S: I have two questions, Rinpoche. One, when you were talking about the one-flavorness of things, did you mean that there isn't an experience and an experiencer, but that we are the experience?

V: Can you run down your logic?

S: Does that limited point of view ever disappear in the vajrayana, or does it just appear that whatever is viewed, or whatever is experienced, is all there is?

V: I don't think anything in particular will disappear or reappear. Instead, it is a state of being where we could actually make a further statement of things as they are much more clearly. You see, the idea of attainment is not so much getting to a new field, or a new experience, particularly, but refining what we have already. Otherwise, we are completely helpless—if we have to reform ourselves, if we have to change everything, make green into yellow, yellow into black, or whatever have you. That whole thing doesn't work, because if you have to make rocks out of flowers, flowers out of rocks, and daytime into nighttime, nighttime into daytime, it doesn't work. The idea is very basically, simply, that we have every possibility already in us. That is our inheritance as sentient beings. What we have to do is refine whatever is there—refine and refine and refine, completely refine.

S: The other question I had was about the idea of space. In *The Tao of Physics,* Fritjof Capra talks about there being particles, or very basic constituents of the inner nucleus, that sort of support one another. He says that they are part of a ring, and that you can't destroy them, because one just turns into another one of the constituents of what makes it up. So it is never really destroyed, it just turns into something else, and it can turn into things continually.

V: Well, that seems to be an interesting point; that actually fits. That particular particle has to have its own thing to begin with; otherwise, it couldn't turn into anything else. And because of its existence, therefore it has sympathetic qualities to relate with the rest of it. That seems to be what we were talking about. One-flavor, one-taste, is precisely that. It is

one taste; therefore, all the tastes and flavors can be included in the whole thing.

S: Got ya. Thank you.

V: You're welcome . . . Another red.

S: You have talked about the EVAM principle in terms of a lot of other terms that we have some familiarity with in other contexts: renunciation, discipline, commitment, faith, vast space, and now, jnana and mahasukha. Is there anything actually new in EVAM, or is this just a superjargon that helps us to understand the rest of the stuff?

V: What do you think? [*Laughter*]

S: Well, I think the second one.

V: I think so. You see, it's too bad. I'm afraid this whole thing is too bad, it's too bad that we didn't come up with a new gadget. That's one of the beauties of Buddhism, that new jargon could develop, or seemingly could develop, but it is based on old hat—therefore, it is new jargon. Old hat could be sold as an antique . . . ship?

S: What do you mean, identify with the space?

V: Float, but not float. If you are space already, you cannot float. It is it. *Comme çi, comme ça.*

V: Bald-headed guy there? [*Laughter*]

S: What about sickness and total pain? Is there such a state of complete total pain that there is no sukha and no way out but pain itself? Then what happens? Or does the pain become one taste, too?

V: My dear sir, vajrayana is not Judaism.

S: Yeah, well, that's why I'm asking. [*Laughter*] That's why I'm asking.

V: Everything is sukha—in fact, mahasukha rather than just mere sukha. No circumcision is necessary.

S: Circumcision is necessary or no circumcision?

V: No circumcision.

S: Yeah, well, sure.

V: No circumcision!

S: Yeah, sure. Oh sure. Yeah, on that.

V: Come as you are, as they say. [*Laughter*]

S: Would you say something about the dakini playful aspect of E?

V: Well, it's atmosphere. In terms of practice, theoretically what should happen to a student of vajrayana is that the minute you wake up you are supposed to be able to create a new pun. [*Laughter*] In spite of the fact that you might have a hangover or had a depressed night or

didn't get any sleep—still you are able to join in along with the cosmos. That's it!

Well, friends I think it is getting already early. Sorry that you have more things that you wanted to discuss, but we could hold off until later on. I'm sure we will be together for a long time.

I would like to make some closing remarks on this particular seminar, which has happened very beautifully. Your existence and the particular studies that you have done actually helped me a lot, so that I could freely present what we were going to discuss, what we were going to talk about. At the same time, auspiciously, the whole thing coincided with the visit of Khyentse Rinpoche here, so the whole thing has been brought together much more powerfully and beautifully. And now we are faced with a new challenge, which is how to relate with the energy and wisdom that you have already taken part in. Sitting practice is obviously very important. I hope you will be able to work on these things. Maybe what we have discussed needs further digesting and further work. So please don't jump the gun immediately, but study and think and practice. And also, once more, I would like to thank all of you for being very patient and gentle, and creating a fantastic atmosphere here. Thank you.

Secret Beyond Thought

The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas

EDITED BY

Judith L. Lief

The Five Chakras

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION is also concerned with everyday life, the meditation-in-action principle. Everyday life, in this case, means to feel the textures of life and to experience particular styles of life in terms of energies generally or by relating to psychic centers such as the different chakras in the body. But somehow that isn't purely meditation practice alone at all; it's more of an everyday feeling—the sensitivity of everyday feeling, the subtleties of everyday movement, and the qualities of earth, air, water, fire, and so on. And like the practice of meditation itself, that experience of everyday life and the feeling of these centers should not be particularly centralized in the physical body as such, but it should be related to their essence in the universe, in the cosmos. Sorry to be so long-winded. It just comes out like that. [*Laughs.*] But let us get back to the kitchen-sink level.

There are form, speech, consciousness, quality, and activity in everything. These five principles have been mentioned, particularly in the tantric teachings, by the expression *sangwa samgyi mi khyappa,* which means "the secret which is beyond the measure of thoughts" [lit. "inconceivable secret"]—and such a secret lies hidden in everyday life.

FORM

Let's start with form. The form that we experience is the only spirituality, the only spiritual essence. In other words, this life or this experience of the universe, is the only thing; there is nothing beyond this at all, such

as another plane of existence or whatever you would like to say. It is quite certain that it would be much easier to make a mysterious myth or a mystical experience out of it, rather than seeing things as they are. But if we face the fact of the reality of life as it is, then this world, this physical manifestation, *is* the world. There is no mystery. But that depends on the the subtlety of our experience of this world, how we see it. That's the interesting thing about it: that this world is the the only world; this plane is the only plane there is. It is the world of form, the world of the five elements. But *how* we perceive it—that's more interesting.

This world does not just include what we see alone, but it also includes what we feel and how we perceive this form, existence, physical body; these tangible objects, sounds, feelings, mountains, stars, sun, moon, trees, flowers, rivers, oceans, and so on. In the Buddhist scriptures, the *Heart Sutra* talks about form as empty, emptiness as form, and so on. But that's somehow trying to relate with this experience, one's experience of isness, what is. The earth-bounding quality, the quality which is connected with the earth and solidity—that is the basic essence of spirituality.

People often ask me about the experience of LSD, pot, marijuana, and all the rest of it. I think this question becomes very important, particularly in talking about the manifestation of the physical world and the physical quality of spirituality, as opposed to the emotional and imaginary quality of spirituality. The experience that you get out of any drugs seems to have this quality of space devoid of earth, a tremendous quality of space. Quite rightly people talk in terms of "spacing out." It is a process of spacing out—not on anything, but on space itself, which is the very rich bank of imaginations, memories, frustrations, dreams, hopes and fears and everything. It seems what we experience under such drugs, the drug experience, is pure experience devoid of earth. And universally—in all traditions, schools of thought, religions, philosophies, political theories—there's always conflict as to how to relate the imaginary world to the physical world. Somehow that imaginary world is a very proud one, a very self-contained one. When it is at its highest peak point—either you get high on drugs or you get high on your own self, whatever it may be—there is a tremendous imaginary quality. In other words, there is a quality that could carry you away—you've lost control of it, to your surprise.

This seems to be the ultimate samsara—which doesn't mean bad, of course not. It is another reality, but a reality which is very repetitive and has the pretense of a hypnotic effect. It makes you dizzy. That's why samsara means circle, continual circle. It is like an ocean churning out into the form of rivers and lakes and dissolving back into the ocean. But the ocean churns it all out again, so it's continual repetition. And that repetition is very painful because it is familiar and it is not based on inspiration of any kind, but it is continually going on and on without control. When we lose control of it, then it becomes painful—painful because it begins to overcrowd us. It begins to create a claustrophobic effect. And then there's the yearning for the countryside, the yearning for the beach, the mountains, ventilation, fresh air—which is also a spiritual problem.

It seems that a lot of people tend to leave cities and go out into the country to be with nature, yearning for openness, trying to avoid claustrophobia. That kind of physical claustrophobia has spiritual implications in it as well. So that is a spiritual problem. If you look into the physical world as it is—now I'm talking about form, dealing with the physical side of the world—people who take holidays, vacations, instead of finding luxury within the city, are facing spiritual problems. So the physical world is the spiritual world, and all the problems of the world are therefore spiritual problems of not being able to relate ourselves properly with earth. We seem to be concerned with environment: when we talk in terms of searching for spirituality, we talk of giving up our jobs, our lives in the city, and going to remote areas of the mountainside. But somehow that doesn't solve the problem at all, because we haven't actually come to any kind of reconciliation. We have simply made a shift from one kind of physical situation to another.

So the spiritual essence of form or body, rupakaya, is feeling the textures of situations, of form and the physical side, as they are. That doesn't mean that you have to change your external form as you get into different scenes. And that doesn't mean that you have to dress up in robes or turbans. [*Laughter; Vidyadhara laughs.*] That doesn't mean you have to wear Mandarin nails and that you have to get into the external scene—because that's a very cowardly gesture which means that we haven't reconciled ourselves with what we are, but we are simply playing a quick, very cunning trick on ourselves, very shifty, very clever. We are still dealing with form, and the fact that form, the exterior quality, hasn't actually manifested to us as spiritual form properly. So [rupakaya]

is experiencing forms as they are, the acceptance of the whole universality situation in terms of mandala principle.

Mandala is a Sanskrit word which means "society" or "group." That is to say, once you stand in the middle you could see the panoramic view of all the directions. It is connected with unique or alone—loneliness. Only you can see this vision, rather than anybody else. So the problem somehow boils down to the form of spirituality; it boils down to this question of aloneness or loneliness. If we stop making further ingratiating gestures to please the world and if we just centralize in what is—that I am alone and my spiritual journey is my experience, which is the experience of freedom and independence—then we begin to see that being alone is a very beautiful thing. Nobody is obstructing our vision. We have complete panoramic vision of the whole thing.

So you don't particularly have to dress up in fancy costumes, and you don't have to involve yourself in a particular institution in order to reinforce your argument. You don't have to have someone behind you to prove that what you are doing is right, or a whole organization—"They have their own philosophy, logic, religion, insurance policy, financial statement; they are successful people and they have found out. They have gone as far as to establish an institution!" That seems to be a problem of form. A tremendous conflict with form goes along with that.

On the other hand, somebody might raise the question, how about tradition? What about tradition? We have lost such beauty and tradition in the West, and in the East people begin to corrupt it by Westernization. How about the beauty of wearing robes, and how about leading a life of simplicity of the Middle Ages? There's another problem with form in that. What are we going to do? How are we going to deal with it? What we have been talking about seems to be too good to be true. It seems to be too "with it," too swinging, too up-to-date. There is something suspicious about that, always. How are we going to work with that particular style, that particular problem?

Tradition, in this case, the ancient tradition, has no comparison. It has a really living quality. The wisdom comes out of committing yourself to a particular lifestyle. It is complete action, the completeness of it. It is loneliness as well, but it is complete. But we seem to have gone beyond that particular era. And if now we are going to re-create such a tradition in minute detail, it becomes a game, because the rest of the world flows

in a different direction. If you are trying to hold on to a tradition, there seems to be something artificial about it.

At the same time, there are people who come from ancient traditions suddenly, like the Tibetans. The Tibetans virtually lived in the Middle Ages, the civilization of the Middle Ages, and when they were thrust out by the communist invasion, they were forced to see twentieth-century life. To them it is a novelty to lead the life of the twentieth century. But on the other hand, for people who live in the twentieth century, going back to such a Middle Age culture, Old Testament culture, is also living a novelty, rather than leading a really real life.

So the question becomes: Is spirituality a game, trying to be extraordinary, or is it really something? Spirituality to a lot of people is a game, fascination, product of fascination. But to a lot of people, serious people, it's an honest search, because they themselves suffer in the samsaric style of confusion. They really got themselves into a situation where everything is very depressing, penetrating, painful. To those people, spirituality is not a game. It's a real commitment. And therefore their vision is a more honest one. Those people are not concerned with traditions or dates, or with any kind of facts and figures of the past. But they want: they're hungry people; they want food, they're really hungry. The only thing they care about is that they want something to eat, to survive. I think that is a more compassionate attitude, basically, than that of those associated with sort of a dreamy quality of spirituality as something exotic and colorful, something extremely mystical. Therefore, we put ourselves into this situation of reality, living a life of form, dealing with form, dealing with life, the texture of life, which is form.

Speech

That leads us to another subject, which is speech. Our second subject is speech. Speech is a particular term which has been used traditionally in the sacred writings, but it doesn't mean just words. It is the moving energy. It's another way of communicating the form, logos, prana, force, life force, or movement. This particular principle seems to be a link between form and the movement of the form. It is also communication. Somehow there has been a lack of speech, a lack of this particular principle. Earlier on we were talking about the situation of form, the texture of form. That form must be communicated with energy, with movement,

qualities that communicate. And we could also bring up communication in connection with the emotions; that equally becomes very important.

Speech is a very powerful thing. It is the crescendo of energy that moves, and that links the consciousness and the physical body. This may get a bit too abstract—but the practicality of this is that speech is communication, a link, an all-pervading link. It is like the analogy of shouting: if you shout, everybody can hear it; even if you direct your voice to one particular person, you can't avoid having everybody hear it. That's what speech really means, that very profound meaning of communication: you might think you are communicating to one person at the time, but further communication takes place. While you communicate to one person, that communication also inspires a chain reaction in the rest of the environment around us.

Speech is the absence of the particular self-conscious frozen quality of form, which is not movement, not communicative. This vision could be blocked by fascination or whatever, but at the same time, somehow we have to wake the fascination by speech, by mantra, by word, by energy. The word *mantra* often means "incantation" or "spell." It is the outrageous quality, the quality which does not obey any patternness of anything at all. It just shines out directly, thoroughly, sharply with the situation. The quality of energy, the outrageousness or crazy-wisdom quality of spiritual practice, is speech. And the energy, or prana—which is also associated with warmth, the burning heat of compassion, the quality of consuming, the quality of overwhelming—is connected with this communication.

So the communication of spiritual practice is extremely important in order to deal with the stable quality of the earth. If we could not apply communication, there would be no spiritual practice at all. There would be no scriptures, there would be no teachings, there would be no gestures, there would be no guru, there would be no chela [disciple]. All these relationships exist because of energy, therefore things function along with that. That is speech. But that is not quite enough. There's still something lacking with that exchange of communication.

Consciousness

Now there is the third one, chitta, which is heart or consciousness. Chitta, or heart, is the primeval intelligence that works with such speech

and such form. A feeling of form needs intelligence to feel, and working with the energy also needs this intelligence—but generally of the heart as opposed to the brain. The heart is the center of the body. It is very much connected with direct intelligence, intuitive intelligence. But if this intelligence doesn't function properly and becomes too passive, if it doesn't bring out or inspire enough communication, then the brain begins to function.

It is like the analogy in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* which talks of the mandala of the peaceful divinities being entrusted in the heart chakra, whereas the mandala of the wrathful divinities is in the brain chakra—not the head chakra, but the brain itself. And according to the teaching, when people who die are in a state of bardo, they first experience the peaceful divinities, the tathagatas. And if they don't experience that—there is a tendency that they might find it very irritating to see such sharp and peaceful dignified colors; there's a tendency to run away from that—if they don't get it, if nothing gets clicked with that, then the obvious next alternative is the vision of the wrathful divinities. [*Loud siren; laughter; Vidyadhara laughs.*]

In other words, [the brain chakra is] trying to wake you up. Just pure beautiful overwhelming colors are not enough, there has to be something expressing out of those colors. Instead of seeing beautiful bright red, the red turns into the flaming of herukas; instead of seeing pure white, the sharp dazzling light of white, then in the wrathful figures it turns into the gritting teeth and wrathful eyes of the divinities and the sharp nails. In other words, trying to wake us up. As I said, intuitive is peaceful, connected with the heart. But the intellect is associated with the brain. And this kind of intellect is not ordinary intellectual speculation as we have experienced it, but it's the sharpness of it.

In other words, it is the outrageous quality of mantras such as HUM, which is penetrating sound. HUM is regarded as sound which penetrates. Made out of ha, yoo, oo, and mm: HUM. HUM! Penetrate. That's the seed syllable of the herukas, the outrageous and penetrating quality. If you are not awakened by any other means, then the only way to wake you up is fishing you out with a hook. If somebody's asleep, the only way to wake them up is to pour cold water on them, ice cold water on them. It's that sudden penetrating quality. Therefore consciousness is a combination of the outrageousness of mantra, or speech, and the basic intelligence, sharp intelligence.

Quality

And then we get to the fourth subject, which is quality, or *guna* in Sanskrit. *Guna* means "good quality" or "quality." Again, there has to be a process of awareness which links every situation of life—form, speech, and consciousness as well—something that links all of them together. And the only way of unifying them is to *feel* them as they *are,* to feel their richness. So quality, or guna, is the sophisticated quality of the chitta, the heart or the intelligence. It is a very refined quality which doesn't particularly discriminate between that and this, but it is a feeling of the whole texture, the whole richness of it. And this richness has very much connection in particular with putting things into action. So the fifth chakra, karma, comes into it. If we could unify the solidity of the earth, the energetic quality of the speech, and the intelligent quality of the consciousness—unifying them all and developing vajra pride, real conviction in that—that is guna.

Action

The fifth chakra is karma, which is action, activity or action. Having developed real conviction in things as they are, then the fifth one, karma, is the activator. We begin to put things into action, into practice. In such a case, action doesn't mean that we have to be very active, necessarily. But it's the spirit of action itself: really living life throughout any kind of situations there may be. There again comes the idea of meditation-in-action, because such activity brings out both the negative qualities of form, speech, consciousness, and quality, as well as the positive qualities—because action, in this case, is very provocative, a very living situation.

Action has the quality of electricity, which contains the inspiration that we might feel something is about to happen to us—a change of our lifestyle or situation. So action waits, and then action is put into practice. Whenever a situation happens; just without hesitation, one has to step into it and go with it, go with the situation. Ultimate action is described in the scriptures by the analogy of the full moon reflecting in a hundred bowls of water. The moon has no desire to reflect into them at all, but because there happen to be a hundred bowls of water, there are a hundred moons. But at the same time they are part of one moon, the one

full moon in the sky. So the action is just acted. It is not directed to particular bowls of water, but it just happens, which is working with situations as they are.

This isn't very advanced or fancy exactly at all. We could experience this particular kind of action in the meditative experience or as an aftereffect of the meditation practice. Action begins to develop; we don't have to direct our aim and object and calculate our actions, but it just happens. And since it happens simultaneously with energy, action becomes very dignified and very beautiful, because there is no fear. This action felt the texture of the earth, the solidity of it; this action felt the outrageous energy of the speech; this action felt the sharp sword of consciousness, the intelligence; and this action felt the dignity of guna, or quality, as well. Therefore one doesn't have to go through all the sequences of the numerology, but just one action contains all the other qualities.

Secret Beyond the Measure of Thoughts

Therefore it becomes the secret beyond thought formations, beyond conceptualization. It is secret because it is secret, self-secret. Nobody has to keep this teaching away from anyone. If a person doesn't feel all these qualities and situations as they are, then that person may not be particularly ready for it; they will be blind to it. It is self-secret, therefore. It is known as secret, but secret here is that which is beyond imagination, conceptualization. [*Pause*]

I hope that wasn't too heavy. [*Laughter*] We could discuss it. My entire intention is to try to bring something practical along with these elements, these different types of situations. These five centers, or chakras, do not have to be only within one's body, in a state of body alone at all. But there is an external chakra principle in every situation, and the application of the chakras in everyday life is, I think, extremely important.

Student: Rinpoche, we have an idiom in English—I know you know it—when we say you "learn something by heart." And that expresses this idea about the intelligence being connected with the heart. Because if you know something by heart, you really know it; you don't have to refer to a book or just mull around and think about it. It's just there, in you. Is that that same direct quality of intelligence?

Vidyadhara: I think so, yes. You see, that's a very interesting analogy. You can't learn anything by heart by intellectual speculation, but you actually have to feel it and become one with the verses that you are learning by heart. It's a direct link of intelligence.

S: But the chitta sounded like it was some kind of a center. I didn't understand that very well.

V: Well, it is a center. But since a center cannot exist without its fringe, the eccentric, therefore it is related to form and speech as well. Form and speech create the possible functioning of the chitta.

S: So it arises and dissolves according to the flow of the situation?

V: You see, these experiences are not constant experiences, like the sun shining throughout the whole day. It is a sort of pulsating quality. It has a pulsation quality, because it radiates out with situations and because situations are revolving around it. The speed of speech is extremely abrupt and sudden: in working with the feeling of earth, sudden experiences, intelligence, sharp intelligence happens. It seems that is the principle of the different petals of the chakras, the different spokes of the chakras in the symbolism and visualizations of yogic practice. You have spokes or nadis, which are like the spokes of an umbrella, coming out of the chakras. That is the quality of the abruptness, the quality of sharpness. Chakras are not flat round things at all, but they have many spokes expanding out, which is an interesting point.

S: I don't understand the whole concept, so I can't relate to that.

V: Well, it's the intelligence principle. But I don't think chitta is particularly outstandingly important or more centralized than any of the other situations. It's just pure intelligence, the wisdom quality which goes with energy and which goes with the solidity of earth.

S: Earlier you mentioned the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—and I was wondering how those fit into this scheme?

V: It's the same thing. Form is connected with earth; speech is connected with fire; action is connected with air or movement; and guna is connected with space. [And chitta is connected with water.] In other words, it is experiencing the qualities of the elements within one's psychological state: the earthy quality; the quality of consuming, which is speech; the quality of flowing, which is intelligence or consciousness; and the quality of air, which is connected with action, because it's very powerful and direct.

S: I was wondering, in a slightly different context we have a saying

that somebody is a wet blanket or somebody is full of hot air, and I'm wondering whether these phrases are really talking about the qualities of the elements in people. For instance, somebody who is a wet blanket might have an excess of earth and water among his qualities.

V: [*Skeptically*] Could be. [*Laughter*]

S: Rinpoche, in the beginning of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* it says, "Earth, water, fire, and all the elements, the animate and the inanimate, all partake of the nature of self-existing equanimity, which is what the Great Wrathful One is." Does that mean that the Great Wrathful One is the same as space?

V: Well, that's sort of the undercurrent of all of these situations. It is that which runs right through them all, whether we are talking about earth or fire or water—particular qualities of emotions, or whatever it may be we are dealing with. There is some underlying continuity of space where all of these things are taking place. From the point of view of people who are on the path, it could be said to be meditation; but for people who have transcended the path, it could be said to be the state of nonmeditation.

That kind of continuity of situations is the actual meaning of *tantra*. *Tantra* means "thread" or "continuity." For instance, you could unify 108 beads with one thread. Everything could be unified into one situation. We may be talking about these different qualities and so on, but they are not really separate qualities. They have some basic continuity. The Great Wrathful One is the unmoving, invincible quality of space, that oneness.

When one experiences the background of all these, nothing can shake your experience; nothing can change your experience; the experience remains as it is. Wrathful doesn't necessarily mean angry, but retaining overwhelming power. I mean, the same thing could apply to fire: we could say fire is a wrathful thing because it has its own quality of overwhelming power.

There is a natural state of completeness in the state of meditation where there are no cracks, so to speak. Everything is completely secured and there's no gap or crack that you can get into in order to create chaos. That's the wrathful or invincible quality of the experience of the different textures of the emotions of the five elements.

S: I'd like to hear just a little bit more about tradition. I had understood it as being not just custom or the handing down of outward forms, costumes, and all that, but the transmission of ancient wisdom, which

seems to be the phrase you used. And that is really connected with the idea of tradition, because it doesn't depend only on someone's individual fantasy or invention. There's something that's been passed on in a sacred kind of way, so to speak, orally, properly spoken, so that it can be thoroughly communicated.

V: Yes.

S: I wouldn't cast that aside, would you? [*Laughter*]

V: [*Laughs.*] Well, I think what you are saying is the same as what I am saying: that tradition is wisdom rather than purely based on custom. But wisdom is living, a living experience which isn't actually handed down necessarily, at all. The inspiration of a chain reaction takes place, but each person awakes in accordance with his own wisdom. Therefore it is not old wisdom, but it's young wisdom. [*Laughs.*] And a certain way, or a certain style of doing things or of behaving, a certain style of conducting life, also seems to be a part of that. It isn't that an old thing is handed down, exactly, but because a person is inspired in his own wisdom, and he or she behaves in accordance with his own wisdom; then somehow—strangely enough, ironically—his behavior becomes similar to those others who behaved that way. [*Laughs.*] That's good.

S: Rinpoche, could you say that the effect of hallucinogenic drugs is born entirely through the realm of mind phenomena?

V: I think so, yes.

S: Yes, that's what I understood.

V: Good. [*Laughter*]

S: How do you distinguish the intelligence and the thoughts?

V: I don't think there's any difference at all. Heart has a notion of being a center; intelligence seems to have a notion of being sharp and enlightened. But this notion of being in the center is not a physical center or physical chakra. It is a question of being right there. That is the idea of chitta, or heart—being there on the spot. And if you are being there on the spot, then there's also intelligence with it, as well.

S: Now most people equate intelligence with brains or mind. But intelligence is more than just reason, because your reason can be used to prove anything.

V: Mmm.

S: It is purely the logical faculty, which demands examining.

V: That's true, yes. I mean, in order really to feel these subtleties of earth and form and speech and gunas and everything, you can't rely just

purely on reasoning mind. In fact, reasoning mind is a very weak thing, and logicians could prove right things wrong and wrong things right. But this kind of intelligence is very efficient. It seems like a very efficient radar system, so to speak, that could always feel what is there and what is not there. It doesn't depend on speculation at all; it's purely just seeing what is, directly. That is why there's the notion of awake, budh. *Budh* means "awake," and the word *buddha* is derived from that. That's why they use the notion of awake, rather than learned or clever. It is a kind of natural instinct without any conditions at all.

S: Does that operate only in a state of meditation or when you've reached the state of liberation? I find that I understand what you are saying intellectually, but in terms of it really being an operating force in my daily life, it's not. Is it that I'm not liberated?

V: I don't think so. It's that you are not practicing it. But if you do practice it, if you really put it into practice, there will be a glimpse of all these situations. You will see it, you'll feel it. I mean, what we are doing at the moment here is that we are talking about it, we are not doing anything about it. That's quite obvious. And if we begin to relate to ourselves, then we don't have to be highly evolved persons necessarily at all. I mean, the things that we talked about are very primeval, and very primary things, really. It is the experience you get through the practice of meditation, as well as the experience you get through everyday life.

As long as you are willing to learn, willing to open yourself toward it, then just so, experience comes to you. It's a question of really putting it into effect. You might understand it intellectually, to start with, but then you have to put in more effort than that, and really be willing to commit yourself into it properly. And once you've made a real commitment, a real opening toward it, then you can't avoid it. Even if you wanted not to experience it, you couldn't block it away. These experiences just come. There's no need for magic in order to experience it, but just simply, one has to allow oneself to be in that situation of openness.

S: You started off by saying that spirituality is trying to relate the imagination to the earth. Where does the imagination come into the five principles?

V: It seems the imagination, in this particular case, is confusion rather than inspiration, that which causes conflict between space and earth. It is confusion. So in order to see these, in order to feel these, one really has to come down to earth, to start with. That is to say, one has to see

the foolishness of the imagination, the dream. You might say that later on there would be the potential of imagination transforming and dissolving into the realm of speech and the realm of heart. But somehow, to begin with, that's too dangerous. It is premature, because there's quite a likelihood that you will bypass understanding the principle of earth and get directly to the principles of speech and heart, which is quite a dangerous thing. So like anything else, to begin with, no fantasy, no imagination, no expectation of magic. Just work on earth.

S: Rinpoche, could you tell us how guna is connected with spaciousness and how all that is connected with the chakras?

V: Guna, well guna is another type of intelligence, seems to be. It is similar to the intelligence or the feeling of earth, at the beginning, because guna is connected with earth as well as space. The color is yellow, a gold color. In other words, in regard to the sharpness of the chitta and the intelligence—in order not to get carried away with the excitement of the intelligence, guna brings it down, regulates the whole thing together, and then transfers its process to action, or karma. So guna, in this case, acts as a scale. It has all the qualities of the other elements. It has the intelligence as well as the particular qualities of sanity.

According to the yoga tradition as well, in the visualization of chandali and in kundalini practice, when the chandali flame is raised up in the navel chakra, that's the most dangerous time because it's the junction of all the nadis. It's the most dangerous point, how to relate to it. So one must develop guna in this case to even out and work with everything in a very even principle, because there's the likelihood of losing ground.

Guna is the space quality. In other words, guna is the space of earth itself. It is not space space, which is the intelligence in this case, but the space of earth. Guna is the regulator which evens out and balances the whole situation. It seems to be quite dangerous, this process of working with energy, like chandali practice. You're playing with the energy. If you don't work properly with the guna principle, then there's the possibility of distorting all the nadi systems into imperfection. So guna is, therefore, space—space which fills every gap, space which divides the relationship of this to that, like the space in our everyday life. There are a lot of things that we could go into details about, but we don't seem to have enough time.

S: Rinpoche, could you say a little bit more about the nature of that fifth quality of action? Somehow the analogy came down to me this

morning of breaking through the bureaucracy in your mind. And I thought that last quality of breaking through all conceptualizations or leaping over them was somehow connected to action.

V: Yes, it is connected with action. Such action is not particularly dependent on reactions, but it is just continual action. It is like the principle of [the moon reflecting in] one hundred bowls of water. It doesn't make any difference to the moon at all; the moon doesn't care, but that kind of action still happens. Generally, in the case of our ordinary ego-style of working with situations, our actions very much depend on the reactions of other things. We cannot act if there's no demand, so it is very limited. But in this case, action doesn't require any demand at all. It could be demanding or it could also be not demanding—but in both cases action is applied. So it is not dependent on any particularly fixed thing.

In other words, this action does not need to be inspired. It could be a critical situation or it could be an inspiring situation, but in both cases action still happens. It is the concept of spontaneity. There is an analogy used in the sutras, in which the Buddha says, supposing the whole world is a big curtain, and that big curtain just happens in its own way. Because it is such a gigantic curtain, no one has any possible way of reacting to it. This is similar to the idea of a landslide. When a landslide comes down, it goes through everything—trees and houses, rivers and everything, without any hesitation. It just rolls down very slowly, gently, in a dignified way, like the steps of an elephant, it has been said. Sure and definite.

Action takes place like that because action has the earthbound quality which doesn't allow any frivolousness. It has the knowledge of body; it has the sharp qualities of speech; it has the intelligence of consciousness; and it has the balance of guna. It has all the qualities in it, so it just happens. In the case of the spiritual adviser principle in the ego, its function is purely dependent on the other, because the spiritual adviser is playing a game. It will probably say one thing at one time, but it might say something quite the opposite another time in order to survive. Such action is very frivolous; it depends on reactions.

Perhaps we should stop there and let you meditate. Thank you.

The Four Karmas

Review of the Five Chakras

It seems that the leading point we have been working on is this particular subtlety of dealing with form. I hope that you understand the basic meaning of all these different things. If not, perhaps it would be worthwhile clearing that up before we go on to next subject, so please ask questions.

Student: I hope not beyond speech.

Vidyadhara: [*Laughs.*] Well, speech is the energy associated with form. In other words, it is the vibrations of the earth. For instance, if we visit a particular place, let's say, or home; when we pay a visit to our friend or friends, our first impression would be form—the texture or basic quality of solidity in meeting them, their presence, their whole being, their psyche. But the next thing would be something connected with the emotions and energies. Supposing they had a quarrel before you arrived, then that would suggest a very repelling quality, something negative. Or if the friends were in a very positive situation, there would be a flow in their process of communication among themselves, and you would feel this particular aliveness and flowing quality of vibrations and emotions.

So [form] is something like that first feeling, when we first experience our friends. And then [speech] is when we experience the characteristics that they put out, their particular aspects. It is the exchange of energy, which is prana or life force, wind, breath, or air. It's the air they put out,

the vibrations they put out. And this could apply to every situation of vibrations. In many cases, the vibrations could be very extraordinarily powerful or outrageous ones in which you could save yourself, work with it. It is not only the texture of the solidity but it is something like theater lights. Form is like the stage in a theater and speech seems to be like the light show, or arrangement of lights in the theater, because the texture of the basic solidity of the scene in a theater could be changed by varying the lighting. Any other questions?

S: I don't quite understand quality or guna.

V: Guna, as I've already said in the last talk, is the principle of scale, sensitivity, the speedometer principle which balances the whole thing and which distributes all the energy around—how fast you are going and how slow you are going. It is connected with the basic principles of balance: how much earth quality of solidity, how much speech quality of movement, how much intelligence quality of the heart chakra, or chitta, there is. It's the balancing quality, feeling the whole ground and balancing it. It could be said to be like a natural metabolism which could distribute and solve whole problems.

S: Would that have any relation to the different colors you spoke of in the last talk?

V: Yes, they're all connected with it.

S: Is one's physical sense of balance connected with guna—one's bodily orientation, keeping your balance when you walk, not falling down?

V: Very much so, yes. Anything real is associated with that, because the experience of situations as real and tangible is connected with it. But I think we should try to get on to the next subject, if we could.

The Four Karmas

Pacifying

We are talking about karma, or action. Four types of karma, or action, have often been described in the tantric tradition and in the yogic traditions of teaching. The first karma is connected with pacifying, making things into a peaceful environment. But equally, at the same time, there is a shadow of that karma, which is called devaputra. Devaputra is the evil aspect, or the seductive quality of pacifying. Peacefulness has a se-

ductive quality as well, which is very interesting. The particular pleasure connected with that is seductive, very seductive, either in a material sense or in terms of bodily pleasures, spiritual ecstasy or whatever it may be called. *Deva* means "gods"; *putra* means "son"; so *devaputra* is "son of gods."

Devaputra doesn't appear as negativity, but as a positive thing in the process of spiritual practice; and therefore it is called devaputra, "son of gods"—imitation gods, in other words, pseudo gods, pseudo devas. It's pseudo, secondary; it's not absolute. And this particular action, or karma, includes spiritual practices of any kind, provided that the spiritual practice is based on ego, ego's benefit. An experience could be pleasant, beautiful, or creative, but at the same time it involves the bureaucracy of ego. Therefore it must be, and it is, a plot of some kind because whenever it is involved with this and that, it is involved with the duality of subject and object discrimination. It is not complete identification. And that could be said either in terms of meditative experiences or whatever it may be.

If you don't understand, please ask questions at the end of our session. That would be very good and very helpful to a lot of other people as well. It's not just that you ask a question but it will also help other people to understand. So please keep that in mind—in brackets. [*Laughter*]

Enriching

And then, getting back to the paragraphs, there is the second karma, which is increasing, enriching, developing an enriching quality. Pacifying, if we go back to the first one, is a quality that is direct and peaceful. It is connected purely with not raising any controversy of discriminating the experience of that as opposed to this, but instead accepting with the wisdom of spontaneity and working with that.

The next process is trying to enrich. Having already started by pacifying, the peaceful situation of not taking part in either party automatically leads us to the next situation of increasing wealth. That's the second karma or act. It is connected with just being and producing. It is rather like a tree which stands constantly still, day and night, day and night, day and night; and finally it grows, it gradually grows and produces fruit. Very rich fruit comes out of it. So it's the action of splendor, the action

of tremendous dignity connected with wealth. Wealth is not accumulated by the frivolous quality of any particular action, but it just grows and develops. And that particular situation is developed by being still, peaceful.

It could be said, in regard to our everyday lifestyle, that we don't strive for and manufacture our experiences, but we just be as what we are and just work with our situations of life as we go along. And situations just come along to us; they just happen by chance, and then they develop and bring fruition. So this is enrichment: gradually, spontaneously becoming rich. For instance, if we develop as what we are, we don't have to search for a spiritual master, or spiritual friend, but a friend just presents himself in the situation. We don't have to look for particular books to read, but if we are in that particular state of intelligence, we begin to see the right books by accident and they just happen to come into being. That kind of enrichment of things just happens, gradually develops. The world begins to grow, which is very exciting. We also should feel that we don't have to strive. We don't have to feel that we are starved for particular knowledge. But as we just be what we are, knowledge presents itself.

The mara connected with the second karma is skandha mara, or "the mara of accumulations." This growing wealth, the abundance of wealth of spiritual situations, is connected with the accumulation of psychological problems, as well. That is why it is called the mara of accumulations, or skandha mara, the accumulation of a lot of things. If you accumulate a lot of wealth—equally and automatically, of course, you tend to accumulate a lot of junk, as well. That could be said in terms of our psychological state of being, which is far more terrifying: if you collect psychological junk, it is very difficult to get rid of and it is very much in the way of our working. That goes for the emotions, feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness, and all sorts of styles of collection that take place.

Magnetizing

And then we get to the third karma, which is magnetizing. Magnetizing means drawing everything into our situation like a magnet. Having already enriched with spiritual knowledge, we then work with our understanding. We retain the dignity, but we don't make any move outward.

All the life situations begin to come to us, including the experience of meditation, as well. You do not have to make a journey toward it, but the journey comes to you. The situation comes to you automatically, spontaneously. In the experience of meditation, you don't have to try to accumulate knowledge of everyday life; but if you remain what you are, knowledge just comes to you. You begin to discover and things begin to click one by one with your situation.

But that is also connected with a mara, klesha mara, *mara* being a Sanskrit word meaning "the evil one." And that temptation, or mara, is connected with the kleshas, klesha mara. *Klesha* or *samskara* means "that which brings conflict." In other words, it could be called hang-ups. Kleshas could be translated as hang-ups. That's a good one. [*Laughter*] I must remember that. That is connected with ignorance, which is the basic inspiration of hang-ups altogether. And then, because of that, there will be anger, the possessiveness of passion, pride, envy, and the whole retinue. If we remain as what we are, if we let situations come to us side by side as we be what we are—then simultaneously, of course, there will be this temptation also to collect dreams and expectations and wishes and hopes of what we'd like to be. All that comes in as well; it's an automatic process.

These are the details of karma, the application of karma. I'm afraid this doesn't seem to be as simple as when we talked about the moon reflecting in a hundred bowls of water in the last talk. It doesn't seem to be all that simple once we get into the details of it—which is true of a lot of things.

Destroying

And then there is the fourth karma, which is destruction—destroying instead of just being what is and trying to develop particular situations such as becoming enriched or involving oneself with magnetizing. These first three karmic processes somehow do not work with the subtleties of the situation that we are dealing with, because these three karmic processes of pacifying, enriching, and magnetizing are actually gentle compassion. And there's a tendency which comes up, a hang-up or problem that we mentioned, that one might get fooled, that one might become completely involved in this kind of gentle compassion. There is quite a likelihood that we might fall asleep in this gentle compassion, regarding

it as purely a resting place where we could relax and be kind and nice and gentle. This compassion could turn into idiot compassion quite easily, stupid compassion.

Therefore it is important to have the fourth karma, which is destruction, the quality of destruction, so that compassion doesn't become idiot compassion, but it evolves into the process of destroying whenever destruction is necessary, creating whenever creation is necessary. That is a very important point: that the process of action or karma is connected with something real, the reality of the situation rather than some imaginary quality.

But again, there is a mara quality in this karma, which is Yama. Yama is death, which in this case could be that neurotic quality of idiot compassion again. Idiot compassion is roused and put into action, but it's neurotic, unbalanced, a suicidal process. *Yama* means "death," or "the god of death." Therefore, there is a suicidal process or self-destructive quality involved with it.

The karma of destruction should be very much connected with the creative process. It is more like a pruning process than a chopping-out process. You destroy the dead leaves whenever destruction is needed, but you leave the basic branch as it is. That seems to be the destructive quality [of the fourth karma], destroying what is necessary to be destroyed. But in the case of the neurotic destruction of Yama, it is idiot destruction, a confused one. Instead of just destroying what needs to be destroyed, it destroys the whole thing—the whole branch and the whole tree and the whole root, everything. It begins to get inspired in the wrong way of uprooting whole trees and whole branches, the whole thing. And that is the karmic quality of destruction gone wild, unnecessarily. Similarly, the pacifying process could go to the extreme of becoming too gentle, not particularly having the quality of gentility but becoming purely the activity of being gentle in the external sense.

So the interesting point altogether, of getting beyond these four maras and activating our involvement in the four karmas, is to use situations as they are and not regard negativity as something bad, something that one should get rid of. Negativity is used completely as part of our makeup.

Strangely enough, an analogy just came to me at this moment. And strangely enough, the analogy in the scriptures for Buddha conquering the four maras is symbolized or represented by the particular image that

you see on the mantelpiece here: Buddha sitting on a snake which is making a seat of its coil and a shelter with its head. That is a perfect example of using situations as they are, but at the same time becoming the conqueror of it.

It could be said that negativities are emotions and energies that could equally be used as part of one's destructiveness or of one's creativity. So we should not regard them as negative and something bad, but use them as hospitality in the ego realm, because without ego we cannot achieve enlightenment. Our ego seems to provide a particular stepping-stone, because the ego fools us and makes us convinced that there is such a thing as enlightenment. And if that is so, we have to use the ego process as part of the whole journey—first believing the lie of ego and going through it, and finally going through it completely so that the lie becomes completely inapplicable. You can't apply it. Then the lie just drops away. The false just drops away.

As the false drops away, then the situation develops beyond it. Your energy leads beyond it, so finally the false brings us to the truth. In other words, you can't have truth itself alone. Truth as opposed to what? Truth as opposed to false. So the false is as much true as lie; it is as true as the truth, in this case—which is a very strange conclusion to come to. And similarly, negativity is very much as positive as positives are positive. So the action of the four karmas of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying plays an important part in this process of working with these materials and with the four types of temptations, or maras.

We could start questions or discussions now.

Student: Would you go through the maras of enriching and magnetizing again?

Vidyadhara: Well, the mara of enriching is skandha mara, or the collective constituents of ego, such as feeling, impulse, emotions, and consciousness. In other words, we are rich things. All these impulses and emotions are very rich things. But instead of working with enriching experience as it is, there is another dimension of enrichment, another aspect, which is fascination.

And then there's the mara of magnetizing, or klesha mara. Instead of trying to draw everything into one's experience, there could be a gap in which one's awareness is not particularly being in the situation of openness. And whenever there's a closedness of the awareness happening,

then there's a chance of the five kleshas coming into it, the hang-ups that we were talking about, in terms of hatred, desire, envy, or whatever. And also, it seems that these particular emotions are not really an outgoing process, but they are the claustrophobic situation of emotions coming in. Klesha mara could take the disguise of magnetizing, as in the temptation of Buddha, when the daughters of mara try to fill every gap by seducing you or by throwing all sorts of extra greasy things into it.

S: You mentioned gentle compassion. I'd like to know if you could talk a little bit about a not-so-gentle compassion, or harsh compassion. For instance, I've heard that to master karate one must really understand compassion, and I don't fully understand that.

V: It's a question of not being kind purely for the sake of being kind. You see, that whole idea comes from conceptualization. When we talk about compassion we talk in terms of being kind. But compassion is not so much being kind; it is being creative to wake a person up. It is communicating properly rather than just purely being charitable and kind. So if you see that kindness is beginning to become addictive to the person, then you stop being kind. You strike them to wake them up.

S: But what I had in mind is the exercise of compassion when someone is trying to strike you.

V: Well, it could be a ghastly experience for a few seconds—for a few days, for that matter. You see, compassion could be kind. But at the same time, [idiot] compassion could be fulfilling what you want or trying to help a person in whatever way that person wants to be helped. This could go too far. For instance, if you continuously give sedative tablets to a person, in the end that person could be hooked on them rather than just purely using them to cure the pain. A person could get hooked on it. So then there's the decision of not continuing, not going on with that feeding of the person's weakness anymore. You really have to be brave to create chaos, disturbances, or upset as far as the other person is concerned, to stop feeding them such sedatives. And if we are the object of this, it could be a ghastly experience; we could regard that person as really being cruel to us. But sooner or later we will discover it, of course. I mean, that's a very logical thing. That's very obvious, in a way.

S: I don't think I understood the last point.

V: I mean sooner or later you realize that the person's cruelty was a kind gesture. You'll be grateful that you are not hooked on sedatives. [*Laughs.*] It's very simple.

S: Does what you say imply that the spiritual path is also a karmic process?

V: This particular type of karma is deliberate karma rather than the chain reaction of karma, the cause and effect of karma. Do you mean that?

S: Well, the way you described it, it seems as if there are four types of karma. And with each one of the types, it's as if there are two paths. One type was the spiritual path—and one could choose that at each moment. So it sounds as if karma is involved in the spiritual path, as well.

V: I think so, yes. It's a creative process. And the word karma could come from the same root as creation. It means creating, producing, activating situations. Of course it depends on the subtlety of the activating qualities, but it could be spiritual as well as everyday style.

S: But you've said that the whole thing is not to sow a new seed of karma.

V: Well, this kind of karma is quite different from the karmic chain reaction. This particular karma is living karma, which does not have any entanglement. It is just the sharp blow of the occasion, of the moment, like the blow of a sword. You apply the karmic action appropriate to the situation. And having already applied it, then it fulfills its functions automatically, on the spot. The other kind of karma, the cause-and-effect principle of karma—sowing the seed of such karma is not really an act of intelligence; it could be started from neurotic tendencies of any kind, frivolousness of any kind. It is not perfect karmic action. But today we are discussing karma as close to the enlightened actions of karma, the karma of buddha, the buddha activity principle of karma.

So there are two types of karma, which could be called greater karma and lesser karma. Greater karma is these four types of karma, which are deliberate, which do not involve chain reactions any more, because the whole purpose of greater karma is to break the chain reaction. It is applied to action in the moment, on the spot. The other karma is the chain reaction process, or lesser karma.

S: When you spoke of the four types of karma, there seemed to be two aspects in each of the four types. I think you called one of them mara. Was that the mechanical one?

V: Yes. The mara could start creating the chain reaction karma, or lesser karma because we are touching on a very sensitive point of ego, really getting to the nerve of it. And there's a tendency to interpret every

greater karma into lesser karma. The tendency to do that always happens, you know. There's a kind of secondary impression of the greater one which could fool you into thinking it could be the greater one as well. But in actual fact it isn't.

This comes up in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as well. When you see the bright light of Vajrasattva—the sharp, awe-inspiring, beautiful, bright blue color—there will be an impression as though there's a reflection of that blue which is less irritating and bright, more attractive. One is led to that by temptation. The same symbolism goes on with all kinds of processes. There's the enlightenment experience—which is irritating, awe-inspiring, overwhelming, sharp, and precise. Then there's a secondary type of enlightenment—which is not all that awe-inspiring and sharp, but attractive, seductive. That's the spiritual adviser's handiwork. [Ed.: Referring to the spiritual adviser aspect of ego's bureaucracy.]

S: You said that secondary actions interpret.

V: I think it's too literal, yes. It is too literally connected with the convenience of what you are; there's too much feeling of comfort involved. That is why it is called devaputra, the seductive quality of the first mara, always trying to bring in this comfort quality, as well.

S: So the pacification is to pacify yourself.

V: Mm-hmm.

S: Are you saying that for each positive step, there is inevitably a negative seductive aspect of mara?

V: Always.

S: Inevitably.

V: Inevitably, yes.

S: With the exception of final enlightenment.

V: Quite. Yes. Always. Because ego is taking part in it, and ego is very clever in adapting himself to that situation.

S: How then could there be any progress?

V: Well, progress just happens.

S: How could there be progress toward enlightenment, if for every step one takes torward enlightenment one is at the same time pulled back inevitably by this mara, or temptation?

V: Well, this is why there's the whole idea of taking away the watcher in the practice of meditation. You do not watch yourself doing this and that, but you just do it. That's the whole idea of complete involvement, identification with the technique of practice. Just doing it. And that's also

the very reason it is important to have nondiscrimination, not regarding good as good or bad as bad, but transcending all these. The identification is very important in this case. Complete involvement is more important than anything else. It is nondualistic, which is an invincible thing.

S: What does the identification do?

V: Identification—in the study of the middle way, Nagarjuna calls it a vajra nail, diamond nail. It is a complete nail made out of diamond. Nothing can destroy it, or its application. So identification takes away completely the dualistic reporting back to the brokers of ego.

S: So that you can't interpret?

V: You can't interpret because you have been completely nailed with the diamond, with what is. If you want to go and report back to central headquarters, you can't do it. That is why the definition of prajnaparamita has been said to be beyond words, beyond thoughts. You've been reduced to dumb and deaf. Even if you want to report back to central headquarters, you can't speak a word of it. [*Laughs.*] There are no words to report back. [*Laughs some more.*]

S: Does that do away with mahayana, with the idea of the bodhisattva ideal, when there's no interpretation at all?

V: Well no, that *is* the mahayana. We haven't gotten to the vajrayana yet. There's something more than that. [*Laughs.*]

S: Whenever you talk about going completely with the situation, I begin to get afraid [*laughter*] about the worst. I mean, couldn't I lose the path? Maybe if I go with the situation I'll never see you again, or maybe I'll go off the way. Couldn't it happen that if one doesn't watch where one's going, one may lose all contact with the teaching and just become a drunk? [*Laughter*]

V: You see, the whole point is that if you are identified completely with what is, then you are in keeping with the energy, force, speed. There's *less* chance of losing the way. It's like a very skillful driver. He might go 150 miles an hour, but he knows what he's doing; he's keeping with his energy. He or she never panics. For instance, he never brakes suddenly; when he has to slow down, he changes gears and he just gradually slows down. He never makes a sudden panic move.

S: A highly skilled driver really is there all the time, watching everything.

V: Yeah.

S: And you're saying to stop watching. It's like saying to get into this

racing car, turn on the engine, get up to a hundred miles an hour, and then shut your eyes! [*Laughter*]

V: But there's nothing to identify with if you shut your eyes. Identifying means going with the speed. Don't think that you're a driver and the car is a separate thing. Identify that you are actually the car. If you have to pass very narrow gaps, identify yourself with the car—then you feel how narrow the gap is. You know how to pass it. You know how to control yourself. [*Laughs.*] You do not just abandon altogether. You see, identification or letting-go doesn't mean abandonment. It's completely being what is there. I mean, this tends to happen if you have your own car and you know how wide your car is, how fast your car will go. Then you have no particular conflict of any kind of all, no fear, because you know your car well, how wide it is and whether you could pass that particular gap or not. The whole thing is that you become identified with the car. You know exactly what to do.

That doesn't leave us sort of completely faithfully giving in. There seems to be a conflict between the different aspects of openness. Openness could mean being completely open and susceptible to any situations; or it could mean reducing yourself to an infant, handing yourself over to somebody. But that isn't openness. Openness is just to be what you are. You don't give your ground. You retain your ground as well as your intelligence. But you work, dance together, in partnership style rather than completely surrendering.

S: So what you said is that the situations that life brings you are filled with karma; and if you conquer them you're enlightened and if you fail, it adds to the lesser karma, the spiraling effect. And the way to conquer that is through identification and openness. I'm getting the sense that you can't do that through thinking. Is it only through meditation that you can conquer karma, for if you're not ready for it there's nothing you can do but just add more karma?

V: Are you talking about the chain reaction of karma?

S: Yes.

V: Well, in this case, meditation seems to be the only answer. Unless we are in the state of meditation, or meditative style of some kind, we tend to plant more seeds of further involvement. This includes dreams, fantasies, daydreaming of any kind. We are all the time creating more things, churning out a lot of stuff altogether. And when we churn out more stuff, this stuff must go somewhere, which goes along with the

karmic chain reaction and adds to this particular energy. This happens all the way along.

The only way to stop this chain reaction is not to churn out any more stuff, not to churn out more complications to add to neurotic confusion. In fact, that seems to be the basic principle of the meditation that I have been talking about: keeping to simplicity rather than using any kind of exotic techniques which could be interpreted in terms of churning out more karmic patterns, or images and symbolism of any kind which will tend to sow karmic seeds.

So meditation is another way, a kind of nonviolent way of boycotting the karmic administration: not taking part anymore, just not doing anything. That creates tremendous chaos for the regular karmic chain reaction. It could be terrible. But that seems to be the only way to do it. We might talk about good karma and bad karma, but whether we are working on good karma or whether we are defending bad karma, whatever it may be, we are already on track, involved in the speed of the samsaric pattern. We are just revolving around in any case. So karma doesn't seem to be worthwhile playing with in any case.

S: What do you mean by neurotic?

V: Insane, in the sense of not knowing what is yours and what is not yours. I mean the chain reaction of projections: we project outward, and a few moments later we begin to think they are not our projections but are threatening us [from outside]. We begin to be completely confused. It is kind of a hallucinatory thing. We create our own situations, but a little bit later those situations begin to threaten us as though they were completely external—which is losing the original point. It is sort of absent-mindedness in a very neurotic sense. Asleep. Dead drunk.

S: Could you give some examples of these kinds of projections?

V: Well, a lot of situations happen in life, and we impose particular adjectives on things. We put very fixed ideas on them: names and conceptualized things. Having already put these heavy trips on situations, then we begin to become afraid of them as though they already existed independently of us. But originally you made them, you created them. And your creation begins to attack yourself then. And as you try to run away more and more—the faster you go, the faster *they* come after you. [*Laughs.*] It's a very big trip. I think the ultimate experience of samsara is highly illustrated by an acid trip. It seems that in many cases it happens that it enlarges the whole thing.

S: If I'm on a drug trip and I imagine a great dragon coming at me in my mind, the thing to do is let him eat me. Do you agree with this? Is that true? [*Laughter*] I can't believe that.

V: But he probably wouldn't. [*Laughter*] You wouldn't let him eat you, probably you wouldn't.

S: Well, what happens right now is that one blocks out the image and just escapes and starts trying to shoot him.

V: Well, that tends to happen. You see, there are certain situations in which the basic security policy still remains intact. In whatever happens, however confused you may be, the security still works, the insurance mentality works always without failing. That seems to be the hang-up.

Well, perhaps we should stop there, this particular seminar. Thank you for being very patient and waiting. I hope that we could work together. Whether the path is a confusing one or a clear one, nevertheless situations are there, so I'm sure we could work together. And it seems to be an important point to try to work on our individual practice of meditation as much as possible, always.

It is quite ironical that meditation practice doesn't seem to have a direct link with everyday life, because meditation is sitting down and doing nothing and everyday life is an active process. But somehow or other, becoming what you are, being what you are in the state of meditation practice—such an inspiration of sanity tends also to work with everyday life. The by-product of meditation continues in everyday life. The whole inspiration continues in everyday life. So there's never a dull moment. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Students: Thank you.

Selected Writings

The Bardo

BY CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA AND RIGDZIN SHIKPO

Of all the teachings associated with the name of Tibetan Buddhism, perhaps the best known is that of the so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead. *The title is entirely of Western coinage and bears no relation to the Tibetan title,* bar do'l thos grol, *"Liberation by hearing while between two (states)." As the Tibetan title suggests, the contents are much more profound and of much more general application than a mere description of an after-death state and a guide through its difficulties. This work was composed by Guru Rinpoche and made into a terma by him, to be later discovered by the Nyingma tertön Karma Lingpa.*

Since Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Francesca Fremantle have retranslated this text, I thought it might be of interest to present a commentary based upon some notes given by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche when he lived in Britain. I suggest that they be read in conjunction with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's commentary in his new translation, and that any apparent conflict be treated as an error of my own, not as implying any ambiguity in the teaching.

RIGDZIN SHIKPO
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THE ALAYA

The alaya is the ground of origin of samsara and nirvana, underlying both the ordinary phenomenal world and the trikaya. Since it is more

fundamental than either, it has no bias toward enlightenment or non-enlightenment.

It has within it the living, creative energy of the dharma, manifesting as the two aspects of prajna (wisdom, intelligence) and karuna (love, compassion), and the realization of the identity of samsara and nirvana, which is called "the wisdom of the alaya," the alayajnana.

As a simplification one may take the essence of the basic qualities of the alaya to be the following five buddhas:

1. Vairochana ("The Luminous One"); white; east; hatred (dvesha); water, flowing; peace in the alaya.
2. Ratnasambhava ("The Jewel Born"); yellow; south; pride (mana); earth, solidity; richness in the alaya.
3. Amitabha ("Infinite Light"); red; west; passion (raga); fire, warmth, compassion power in the alaya.
4. Amoghasiddhi ("Complete Fulfillment of All Action"); green; north; paranoia (irshya); air, energy; volition, karma in the alaya.
5. Samantabhadra ("The All-Good"); blue; center; delusion (moha); space, all-pervading openness; neutral ground in the alaya.

The creative energy of the alaya became so strong that it broke away from the alaya and became avidya, just as a light may become so bright that it dazzles and causes confusion, or someone may be so overintelligent that he sees difficulties where there are none, or so overimaginative that he creates fearful illusions where none exist.

This avidya ignores the wisdom of the alaya, the alayajnana, and from the resulting confusion the sound or negative alaya, the alayavijnana is produced.

The evolution of the kleshas from avidya takes place in the following manner.

The overpowerful creative energy breaks away from the alaya and becomes avidya (or moha), which ignores or forgets the alaya. This is the first establishment of the ego, and from it fear springs when one realizes that one is an individual and alone.

As a defense against this fear, pride (mana) arises and the ego becomes fully developed.

Next comes paranoia (irshya), the need to protect oneself from others, and out of a desire for security to try to make gains at others' expense.

In order to increase security, desire (raga, trishna, lobha) appears in all its forms, and one accumulates more and more of that which establishes one's position in samsara.

Finally, hatred (dvesha) arises, which is the development of extreme self-assertiveness, where one leaves no room for doubt about one's motives or actions and allows no relaxation in one's attitude.

The evolution of the kleshas and the production of the alayavijnana from the overpowerful creative energy of the alaya is likened to water changing into ice.

Just as when water becomes ice this does not indicate either a deficiency in the nature of water or that ice is of a nature different from water, so for example when the active element within compassion is misrepresented by avidya or when a fascination for it arises, its transformation into passion (raga) does not change its underlying nature of compassion.

This is why the kleshas are identical to the qualities of the five buddhas.

One must not think that this process of breaking away from the alaya and the consequent evolution of the kleshas is something that happened long ago, like a creation myth describing the origin of the universe.

On the contrary, it is happening continuously, throughout time, for at every moment the kleshas evolve from the alaya due to its overpowerful creative energy, and dissolve back into it at the dissolution of that moment.

Of this continual process we are usually quite unaware, and it is the purpose of maha ati practice to experience it.

This can be done in many ways, of which the most important are the yoga of continual relaxed awareness of all experience (leading to a return to the alaya in meditation and everyday life), dream yoga (returning to the alaya during sleep), and yoga practiced at the moment of death and beyond.

The process of return to the alaya may be described in four stages, each of which is associated with a particular state of clarity, a particular depth of shunyata, and a particular state of being.

The first stage is likened to moonlight and is associated with the kleshas rooted in dvesha. Its state of clarity is called aloka, its shunyata is simple shunya, and its state of being is smriti, or awareness.

As the emotions based on dvesha cease to function, the second stage arises, likened to sunlight, and associated with raga. Its state of clarity is alokabhasa, its shunyata is called atishunya, and its state of being is vismarana, or nonawareness.

As the emotions based upon raga cease, the third stage arises, likened to the darkness before dawn, and associated with avidya or moha. Its state of clarity is called upalabdha (or alokopalabdha), its shunyata is mahashunya, and its state of being is anutpada, or unborn.

As the state based upon moha or avidya ceases, the final stage arises, likened to a bright, cloudless sky. This is the final state of clarity, prabhasvara, gone beyond shunyata (and therefore called sarvashunya), and corresponding to the state of being of matyatita, gone beyond the mind, which is the alaya itself.

It will be obvious that this procedure of return to the alaya is accompanied by the disappearance of the kleshas in reverse order to their appearance.

Just as fear was the first reaction to arise when the breaking away from the alaya took place, so it tends to be the last barrier to the return to the alaya. As one begins to return to the alaya, fear may arise due to a sensation of impending annihilation, and this fear must be fully entered into before the return can be accomplished.

If, due to fear, one turns away from the alaya, one recapitulates the evolution of the kleshas and passes through the above four stages in the reverse order.

The Meaning of Bardo

The Tibetan word *bar do* literally means "between two," and although it is popularly taken to refer to the after-death state, its principal meaning is the moment between the evolution and dissolution in the alaya, the nowness in every moment of time, the continually moving point between past and future.

Thus bardo occurs at every moment of time, and to understand it is to understand the development of consciousness.

At every moment there is an opportunity to understand bardo, and the key to its understanding is nowness.

This principal meaning of bardo is sometimes called the bardo of existence, the sipa bardo (srid pa bar do).

There are six types of bardo:

1. Bardo of existence (bardo as experienced at every instant of time).
2. Bardo of birth (bardo as experienced at the moment of conception or reappearance in a particular loka).
3. Bardo of dream (bardo as experienced during sleep).
4. Bardo of life (bardo as experienced in the waking state).
5. Bardo of death (bardo experienced at the moment of death).
6. Bardo of the after-death state (bardo as experienced after the moment of death and before conception or reappearance in a particular loka).

The states of experience in (2)–(6) above each have distinctive characteristics that make them naturally seem uniquely different, but (1) is the underlying state which is always present and common to all, that is, the evolution from and the dissolution back into the alaya that proceeds all the time without stopping; the sleeping state, the waking state, the death state, and so on, are just particular modes of this process.

The bardo of existence has already been dealt with in some detail, and the bardo of life is simply the nowness of everyday life.

The bardo of dream consists of two parts, the first being the falling into a deep, dreamless sleep, and then the state of dreaming proper.

As one falls into dreamless sleep one returns to the alaya, passing through the four stages, but the mind is usually too dull to recognize this.

After a while one leaves the alaya and emerges into the dream state, and the bardo is then the nowness of this state.

Finally one needs to consider the bardos of death, after-death, and birth which are examined in the next section.

The Bardos of Death, After-Death, and Birth

At the approach of death the body begins to lose its constituent elements, and the first of these to dissolve is the earth element, causing the body to feel increasingly heavy.

Then the water element dissolves and this is accompanied by a feeling of great thirst.

Finally the fire element dissolves and one feels cold and sees flames.

After the dissolution of the elements, the essences of father and mother appear as the white and red bindus, the white coming down from above, the red rising from beneath, the two emotionally symbolizing duality.

One feels trapped between the red and the white bindus, and as they approach each other, the feeling of duality begins to disappear and the fear of annihilation is experienced, because one is returning through the four stages to the origin, the alaya.

At the moment of the joining of the red and white bindus, duality ceases and the state of prabhasvara, the origin or alaya, is experienced, and remains for a certain period of time. This is the bardo of death.

If instructed by a teacher previously (or even if one has only read of it in a book), it becomes the meeting of the mother light (the light of the alaya, the light of the ground, always present whether one realizes it or not) and the child light (the light arising from practicing the path, that is, the clear awareness of the first three stages), and the merging of the two is called the light of fruition.

Even if fear is not overcome during the merging of the red and white bindus, it may vanish here, during the realization of prabhasvara.

A realization at this time is called the "sudden path," attained without going through the six paramitas.

However, if one's understanding is only partial or nonexistent, one's fear becomes so great that one rejects the alaya and duality rearises, one passes through the three stages in reverse order and then due to old patterns of habit, karma, and memory one finds oneself possessed of a mental body resembling one's physical body and the experiences of the after-death state begin, the bardo of the after-death state being the nowness of these experiences.

First dawns the vision of the five buddhas, the projection of the mind's underlying nature. Although peaceful they are very bright and the intensity of the light causes great awe to arise. These ultimate lights give no feeling of comfort or security (they correspond to maharaga, mahadvesha, and so on) and the experience of shunyata that they evoke may be frightening, so that one loses this opportunity for realization.

Because of fear of the intensity of the ultimate lights, one turns away from them and moves toward the dull lights that now appear.

Thus, failing to understand the five peaceful buddhas, one sees these buddhas in their wrathful forms, and the sudden shock of their appearance may bring realization.

If not, one becomes aware of friends, houses, children, animals, and so on, offering help and security, and by becoming attracted toward them and trying to escape from the terrifying mental images that one sees, one loses the memory of one's former physical body and inclines toward a future life in one of the six lokas.

The six lokas themselves are mental projections, and are formed according to our own emotional reactions. For example, our own projection of pleasure becomes the deva loka, our own projection of hatred the hells, and so on, the particular kind of hell experienced depending upon the form of one's hatred.

Thus the six lokas are like dreams, the hells like nightmares, and so on.

However, the hells and heavens differ from an ordinary dream in that since there is no physical body to act as an anchor, one gets caught up in one's own projection and the situation becomes completely real and vivid, and the intensity so great as to constitute a virtually timeless moment of pain and pleasure, which corresponds to those vast lengths of time for which life in these worlds is said to last.

The nowness of the moment of one's conception or appearance in the loka to which one has been attracted is the bardo of birth.

Bardo Meditation

Bardo is something that is meant to be practiced, not just a theory.

It only has meaning if one practices bardo meditation in this life.

All forms of bardo meditation are part of maha ati yoga. There are five main types, the last often being considered a yana in its own right.

Seeing the Kleshas as Enlightenment

Be aware of the development, the building-up of a particular klesha, that is, anger, desire, and so on, and its occurrence as a series of waves.

With awareness one can realize shunyata at the peak of each wave.

Also become aware of the energy in dvesha, the love and compassion in raga, the equanimity and nonaction in avidya, and so on.

Each positive quality is an expression of the creative energy within the klesha, an aspect of prabhasvara.

Seeing the Five Skandhas as Five Buddhas

All that one experiences can be broken down into a particular configuration of the five skandhas. Each of the skandhas must be seen as one of five buddhas, thus:

> Samantabhadra as vijnana skandha
> Vairochana as rupa skandha
> Ratnasambhava as vedana skandha
> Amitabha as samjna skandha
> Amoghasiddhi as samskara skandha

or as mandalas of five buddhas.

The skandhas may appear as buddha forms, buddha lights, or as the buddha essences of the five jnanas.

Continual Relaxed Awareness of All Experience

By continual relaxed awareness of all experience, by becoming increasingly open and entering into it, one develops a direct contact with experience, a realization of nowness.

This has a shock effect, since it takes one back to the original alaya, the prabhasvara, which produces a fear reaction.

One must then enter into this fear and identify with it.

Dream Yoga

As one falls asleep, the activity part of the five skandhas becomes passive due to avidya.

In nonaction, the activity part of the five skandhas also becomes passive, but this time due to the creative energy within avidya.

One returns to the alaya, the prabhasvara, as one falls into deep sleep and remains there for a while.

One can become aware of this return to the alaya during sleep if there is continual relaxed awareness and openness in everyday life and the intention to be aware of the deep sleep state during the day.

The dream state is like the after-death state, unstable and unpredictable.

If there is continual relaxed awareness and openness in everyday life, and the intention to be aware of one's dreams during the day, coupled with comparing the sameness of dreams and the waking state, that is, the dreamlike nature of the waking state and the realness of the dream state, one will eventually be able to be aware of one's dreams.

One then practices by changing the nature of the dream images, for example, one may deliberately jump over a cliff, leap into a fire, turn fire into water, visit a pure land, and so on, until eventually one can control one's dreams.

Finally one will be able to control the dreamlike quality of the waking state also.

Intense Bardo Meditation

Since this meditation, which may be taken to constitute a yana in its own right, the yangti yana, cannot be understood without a knowledge of certain maha ati terms, it is best to consider it in a separate section.

Yangti Yana

Before one can understand this yana or this meditation one must be familiar with the maha ati terms *trechö* ("direct cutting"; khregs chod) and *törga* ("instantaneous attainment"; thod rgal).

Trechö is the "sudden path," achieving realization of the alaya without going through the six paramitas. It emphasizes prajna, the shunyata beyond shunyata, the primordial space quality and the stillness of meditation, and its nature is nowness. It is the negative aspect of nirvana at its highest level.

Trechö is the beginning of atiyoga, and in it one's being becomes the formless meditation itself.

Mahamudra is an aspect of trechö, but still has some involvement with form.

Törga is the highest path, the highest possible kind of attainment, sur-

passing all others. It is seeing the whole universe as meaning (jnana) and symbol (kaya), and realizing that kaya and jnana are identical.

It emphasises upaya and prabhasvara, and is just beingness, with no subject or object. It is the positive aspect of nirvana at its highest level.

Törga is the final stage of atiyoga, being like a result rather than a practice. In it one becomes aware of the identity of the external light (kaya) and the internal light (jnana) and their connection with the five buddhas, the five lights, and the five jnanas. (Refer to "Seeing the Five Skandhas as Five Buddhas" above.)

Both trechö and törga are completely effortless and formless.

They always go together, and are interdependent, although a particular meditation may incline more toward one than the other.

The seven-week bardo meditation called *yangti* ("beyond ati") is the major törga meditation, and is even thought of as a yana in itself, the yangti yoga beyond the ninth yana, atiyoga. By practicing it one attains the rainbow body, or jalü ('ja' lus), which arises from the complete identification of mind (jnana) and body (kaya). This causes the physical body to vanish, first becoming smaller in size until only the hair and nails remain, which then may finally disappear completely, perhaps in the manner of fire or as light.

Essentially the yangti meditation is an intense form of bardo meditation, producing similar effects to those experienced during and after death. It is practiced in complete darkness, the darkness being used instead of light; in this respect it differs greatly from other meditation practices.

Yangti is thought to be extremely dangerous, and facilities for performing it were only available at two or three meditation centers in Tibet.

Every prospective practitioner had to undergo months of preparation and was not allowed to attempt it until he was judged mentally and physically ready.

When he was ready he was left in a meditation cell from which light was gradually excluded until at the end of a week he was in complete darkness.

At first he felt depressed and fearful, but gradually learned to live in the dark.

Every day his guru visited him to give meditation instruction and advice. The instructions were the same as those given to a dying person,

and did not involve visualizations, although mental imagery appeared spontaneously; for example, the appearance of wrathful jnana eyes played a part in the practice.

At a later stage the guru's visits were vitally important, since otherwise the meditator would lose complete touch with reality, forgetting who he was and what he was doing, and being unable to remember his past in any coherent way.

Eventually the dualistic concept of light and dark was lost, and everything was seen in a blue light.

He saw his own projections appearing as five buddha forms (lower), or as five buddha lights (medium), or as the essences of the five jnanas (higher).

It is usual to see the blue light first; it then changes to a different color depending upon how the meditator broke away from the alaya (for example, one might go from blue to white [peace], then to yellow, and so on).

It is a dangerous thing to become fascinated by the colored figures, mental imagery, and visions one may see and then to start deliberately projecting them. There is an oral tradition in Tibet that this fascination can lead to such a withdrawal from reality that one mentally creates a world of one's own and physically enters a state of suspended animation resembling hibernation.

As the meditation proceeds one passes through the stages described in "The Bardos of Death, After-Death, and Birth" above.

The meditation lasts for a nominal period of seven weeks, as in the bardo, but it may in fact vary from a few days to a few months, depending upon the person.

At the end of the meditation the light is gradually readmitted until after a week the windows are completely uncovered and the meditator may leave his cell.

Femininity

OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVADHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHA HAM is the principal *dharana* used by tantric practitioners before the creation of a visualization. It proclaims inherent purity or the immaculate space of basic sanity, which means space uncorrupted by dualistic confusions. This space is the mother principle, which safeguards against the development of ego's impulses. But perception without perceiver or visualization without visualizer is impossible. The mother, having occupied the space with purity, gives birth spontaneously to the visualization.

Feminine energy plays an important part in the Buddhist teaching. Naropa's consort-sister Nigu, whose teaching became most dynamic in the six-doctrine practice; Mandarava, dynamic lady of eternal being, Padmasambhava's consort in India; Kyegudamo of the Sakya tribe, one of Buddha's disciples who supposedly confused his plans for future monasticism; Yeshe Tsogyel, consort of Padmasambhava in Tibet, known as the mother of all Tibetans and preserver of the sacred teachings; Sakyadeva of Nepal, another of Padmasambhava's consorts and exposer of mind's tendency toward neurosis; the follower of Longchen Rabjam, the twentieth-century abbess Jetsun Rinpoche who came near to becoming the rainbow body of wisdom and numerous other woman adepts have attained the highest level of sanity. But relating to them as part of woman's liberation or woman's enlightenment record is silly. Realization does not belong to either sex.

It might be too chauvinistic to speak of woman's role in the teaching. Rather it is the principle of femininity that plays the important part. In this discussion I am not concerned with the sociological significance of woman; my view of this particular issue is based on the respectability of the feminine principle.

In phenomenal experience, whether pleasure or pain, birth or death, sanity or insanity, good or bad, it is necessary to have a basic ground. This basic ground is known in Buddhist literature as the mother principle. Prajnaparamita (the perfection of wisdom) is called the mother-consort of all the Buddhas. The *svabhava dharana* is the rational spokesman of this mother principle. As a principle of cosmic structure, the all-accommodating basic ground is neither good nor bad. In some sense it is neither male nor female. One might call it hermaphroditic, but due to its quality of fertility or potentiality, it is regarded as feminine.

The mother is always present, constantly giving birth. In the tantric tradition of praise of the mother, it is said: "Since you are unborn, you are also unceasing." This brings us to the perspective that this mother is a great-grandmother as well as a young mother. She would also be seen as having given birth to passion. Thus she might be a lover at the same time.

In some tantric writings, the double-triangular star is referred to as the originator of all the dharmas. It is like a cervix, the gate of all birth. The mother principle is productive, constantly churning out the display of the phenomenal world. But the mother is also the consumer, the devourer. Thus the whole process becomes a recycling in which she is both creator and destroyer. Nevertheless, the mother cannot devour or give birth in rapid mechanical succession, because she conditions the fickleness of time itself. She has time to devour and give birth in that she produces the right moment.

Feminine Inspiration

The Sanskrit word *lalita,* "dance of maya," describes feminine inspiration. The female gives birth to a child or a lion cub—an offspring of whatever species—cherishes it, nurses it, encourages it to play games using hands or claws or teeth, until her offspring begins to discriminate. In other words, it no longer mistakes shit for food, this for that. This is an extremely powerful educational process. It can only develop in the environment of feminine inspiration.

Feminine inspiration here does not particularly refer to the activities of a fussy mother or aggressive lioness, but rather to a mother's care. This care creates an extraordinary new situation, a sense of warmth, the

inspiration of the meaningfulness of life; also precaution as to what is not worth pursuing. Mothers are instinctively trained to this; it does not come out of some scholastic system. The Tibetan teacher Paltrül Rinpoche said that the fact that even the most aggressive animals feel compassion toward their young indicates their buddha nature showing through.

Let's not make an idol of this. Let's look at it more cosmically. Feminine inspiration is related to giving birth and caring for the young so that there is no threat. The only threat the mother poses to her young is devouring. If her offspring is not safe, she might devour it to keep it safe, return it to its origin. Such a gesture of compassion may be overwhelming, but it is sincere.

Feminine inspiration projects a world which it can regard as workable and friendly since it is its own creation. It does not render it less friendly for a mother to suck a baby's snot and spit it out, or change its diapers with their lovable odor.

Another aspect of feminine inspiration is regarding what you have created as sacred. You have created Buddhism, Christianity, Sufism—it is your production. Since it is fully yours, respect it, work with it. These teachings did not come from somewhere else; your own openness gave birth to them. Moreover, you gave birth to pleasure and pain. You built Paris, London, New York City. You produced the president of the United States. These things are the product of feminine inspiration.

The Playful Maiden

Once this world is created, it becomes an unguided missile. You have created it; now your creation is going to seduce you or attack you. You might find this relationship strange, incestuous for that matter. Nevertheless, fighting your war, making love to your world is inevitable. It is the only way to keep immediate contact with what's happening around you. . . . You were angry at the construction site. You fell off the top floor of the building because you were so angry. This could be called incest, but it is still a love affair. What is around you is the world, is the mother, is the enemy, is the lover. If not, you couldn't communicate at any point.

The playful maiden is all-present. She loves you. She hates you. With-

out her your life would be continual boredom. But she continually plays tricks on you. When you want to get rid of her she clings. To get rid of her is to get rid of your own body—she is that close. In tantric literature this is referred to as the dakini principle. The dakini is playful. She gambles with your life.

Vajrayogini is one of the main dakinis. She is a sow-headed goddess who is prominent in the tantric iconography and mandala practice. She is the consort of the herukas (the Sambhogakaya Buddhas). She represents the essence of tantric practice because she is the channel as well as the activator. She is the living force, the life-thread of the world. She abruptly instigates situations of chaos or joy. Her sow's head represents ignorance as an adornment. She drinks the hot blood of passion and the intoxicating liquor of confusion. She creates pestilence, war, and famine.

The Manifestation of the Glamorous World

The feminine principle is the perception of colors, directions, time. Thus it is the manifestation of the colorful aspect of the world. Without it, there is no perceiver of this. The perceiver is the masculine principle. In this framework, the masculine principle is not regarded as the master dominating the scene. Moreover, we are not saying that the feminine principle belongs to women and the masculine principle to men. Wherever there is a perceiver, that is the masculine principle; wherever there is a perception, that is the feminine principle.

According to the hinayana tradition of Buddhism, Buddha was compelled to ordain his female cousin. Because women were accepted by the Order, the reign of the Buddhist teachings was supposedly shortened by five hundred years. Also, a woman's body is considered the unfortunate result of bad karma, better only than that of an animal. Women are regarded as being incapable of complete reception and comprehension of the teaching.

This whole approach is valid if you take the feminine principle negatively and narrowly as creator and devourer. But if we relate to femininity as a fundamental and cosmic principle, then the physical situation of having a woman's body is no longer important. Any doctrine is limited. The dogma of the early Buddhists is inseparable from their cultural atti-

tudes. They blamed the feminine principle for giving birth to the phenomenal world. They failed to see the phenomenal world as mother, sister, maiden, or child.

Since dharma is universal, we cannot say to what sex the dharma belongs. Maybe it belongs to neither or either. As long as you respect your manhood or your womanhood, your masculinity and femininity will be an integral part of your being on the spiritual path.

GLOSSARY

THIS GLOSSARY CONTAINS many of the terms appearing in this volume that may be unfamiliar to the readers. Please note that the definitions given here are particular to their usage in this book and should not be construed as the single or even most common meaning of a specific term.

abhidharma. The detailed investigation of mind, including both mental process and contents. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* provides a detailed geography of the workings of mind and thus might be considered a vajrayana abhidharma text.

abhisheka. In vajrayana Buddhism, elaborate ceremonies initiating students into particular spiritual practices. More specifically, abhisheka refers to the meeting of minds between teacher and student, which is essential for the transmission of the teachings. Without the direct oral transmission and empowerment of a master, pursuing such practices would be meaningless.

alaya. The eighth level of consciousness, literally the "storehouse" consciousness. It is the fundamental ground of dualistic mind and contains within it the seeds of all experience.

awake. Trungpa Rinpoche used the term awake as an expression of unconditional wakefulness. Rather than being wakeful, cultivating wakefulness, or waking up, one simply is awake.

dawn of Vajrasattva. This phrase evokes the quality of indestructible purity that arises in the midst of confusion, just like the first light of day. Vajrasattva symbolizes the pristine purity of awareness.

five buddha families. The mandala of the five buddha families represents five basic styles of energy, which could manifest dualistically as confusion

or nondualistically as enlightenment. The enlightened mandala is portrayed iconographically as the mandala of the five tathagatas, or victorious ones. All experience is said to be colored by one of these five energies. The central, or buddha, family represents ignorance which can be transformed into the wisdom of all-encompassing space. In the east is the vajra family, representing aggression, which can be transformed into mirrorlike wisdom. In the south is the ratna family, representing pride, which can be transformed into the wisdom of equanimity. In the west is the padma family of passion, which can be transformed into discriminating-awareness wisdom. And in the north is the karma family of envy, which can be transformed into the wisdom that accomplishes all action.

heruka (Skt.). A wrathful male deity.

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation. A classic text by Jetsun Gampopa, outlining in clear detail the stages of the mahayana path. In it the six perfections (paramitas), or transcendent actions, are presented sequentially, culminating in prajna paramita, or transcendent knowledge.

jhana. A Pali word (not to be confused with the Sanskrit term *jnana*, or wisdom), referring to a state of meditative absorption. Traditionally, four such states are mentioned: desirelessness, nonthought, equanimity, and neither pain nor pleasure. In his book *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, Trungpa Rinpoche describes the four jhanas, which are associated with the meditative experience of the realm of the gods, as limitless space, limitless consciousness, not that / not this, and not not that, not not this.

karma family. *See* five buddha families.

kriyayoga (Skt.). The vajrayana path is divided into six yanas, or vehicles. The first, kriyayoga, emphasizes purification.

mahamudra / maha ati (Skt.). Mahamudra refers to lower tantra, and maha ati to higher tantra. These two approaches to understanding the nature of mind are presented at times sequentially and at other times as complementary.

mahamudra practice. The predominant formless meditation practice of Tibetan Buddhism, in which the practitioner simply lets the mind rest naturally, without contrivance or manipulation.

mantra (Skt.). Mantras are Sanskrit words or syllables that are recited ritually as the quintessence of various energies. For instance, they can be used to attract particular energies or to repel obstructions.

mara (Skt.). One of the temptations or distractions that practitioners encounter on the path. It is said that maras go hand in hand with the degree of one's realization: the more awake one is, the more maras one

attracts. Thus, immediately prior to his attainment of complete enlightenment, the Buddha engaged in conquering the attacks of the maras. These forces have been personified as the demon Mara, with her sons (aggressions) and daughters (passions).

Nagarjuna (Skt.). Nagarjuna, who lived in second-century India, was a foremost teacher and philosopher of the Madhyamaka, or "middle way," school of Buddhist logic, and abbot of Nalanda, India's renowned Buddhist university.

Padmasambhava (Skt.). Padmasambhava, also referred to as Guru Rinpoche, or "Precious Teacher," introduced vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century.

prajna / prajnaparamita (Skt.). *Prajna* means "knowledge"; it has also been translated as "wisdom." As prajnaparamita, the sixth paramita, or perfection, it is said to be the transcendent knowledge revealing the emptiness of all phenomena.

sword of Manjushri. The sword of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Knowledge, symbolizes penetrating insight which cuts completely through ego's deception.

shunyata (Skt.). Literally translated as "emptiness," this term refers to a completely open and unbounded clarity of mind.

samsara / nirvana (Skt.). Samsara is the whirlpool of confusion, and nirvana refers to the cessation of confusion, or enlightenment.

satori (Jap.). In the Zen tradition, great emphasis is placed on the experience of satori, sudden realization.

Tibetan Book of the Dead. This famous text, whose title literally translates as the "Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo," is one of a series of instructions on six types of liberation: through hearing, wearing, seeing, remembering, tasting, and touching. Its origin can be traced to Padmasambhava and his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal. It was later discovered by Karma Lingpa, in the fourteenth century. Intensively studied in Tibet, both academically and during retreat practice, the text is often read aloud to dying persons to help them attain realization within the bardo.

Tilopa (Tib.). A renowned teacher of vajrayana Buddhism in India in the eleventh century. His most famous disciple was Naropa, who through his student Marpa introduced Tilopa's teachings into Tibet.

vajrayana (Skt.). The literal meaning of *vajrayana* is "diamond path." It is also known as the sudden path, because it is claimed that through the practice of vajrayana one can realize enlightenment in one lifetime.

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Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and EVAM. Edited by Judith L. Lief. Halifax: Vajradhatu Publications, 1999.

Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle. Edited by Sherab Chödzin Kohn. Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1991.

Secret Beyond Thought: The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas. Edited by Judith L. Lief. Halifax: Vajradhatu Publications, 1991.

Transcending Madness: The Experience of the Six Bardos. Edited by Judith L. Lief. Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1992.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

JUDITH L. LIEF IS THE EDITOR of three of the books that are incorporated into Volume Six of *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*. In 1976 Mrs. Lief became the Editor-in-Chief of Vajradhatu Publications, the small publishing operation within Chögyam Trungpa's network of meditation centers, which publishes transcripts and small volumes of teachings. At that time, Sherab Chödzin Kohn, the first Editor-in-Chief of Varjadhatu Publications, left that position to establish a headquarters for Vajradhatu and Chögyam Trungpa's work in Europe. In those days Vajradhatu Publications was simply called the Editorial Department. Mrs. Lief remained as the Editor-in-Chief there until late 1981, when she left to become the Dean of the Naropa Institute. At that time, I came on board with Vajradhatu Publications. Mrs. Lief and I have exchanged places, editorially speaking, several times. I remained the Editor-in-Chief of Vajradhatu Publications from 1981 to 1989. During that time, I employed Mrs. Lief as a freelance editor for several projects. When I left Vajradhatu Publications to start the Vajradhatu Archives, later the Shambhala Archives, in 1989, Judy Lief replaced me as the editorial head of Publications. In that role, which continues to this day, she has employed me on various editorial projects. It's always been a delight working with her, in whatever capacity.

In the years since Chögyam Trungpa's death in 1987, Mrs. Lief's editorial efforts have been prolific and diverse. For Shambhala Publications, as the Series Editor of the Dharma Ocean Series, she oversaw the editing and publication of eight volumes of teachings by Chögyam Trungpa, three volumes of which she edited herself. She was also the editor for two volumes of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings on art published by

Shambhala, and she has edited a number of shorter volumes of teachings for Vajradhatu Publications. During this time period, she's also been busy editing materials by other Buddhist teachers, as well as teaching extensively and writing her own book, *Making Friends with Death.*

Sherab Chödzin Kohn, whose overall contribution to editing the works of Chögyam Trungpa is discussed in the acknowledgments to Volume Five, was the editor of *Orderly Chaos*, which appears in Volume Six. He too has been a major "force" in the editorial work to bring Trungpa Rinpoche's lectures from raw transcripts to polished books. A third editor whose work appears in Volume Six, Rigdzin Shikpo (Michael Hookham), has also made an important contribution to the editing of Chögyam Trungpa's material. Rigdzin Shikpo has many notes and tapes from Rinpoche's early years in England, and there are great hopes that he soon will be producing newly edited versions of teachings that Rinpoche gave in England pre-1970. Another article he edited with Trungpa Rinpoche, "The Way of Maha Ati," appears in Volume One.

Larry Mermelstein kindly read through the introduction to Volume Six and provided many helpful comments. He also gave me a photocopy of the earlier published version of "The Bardo," which appeared as "Nyingma Teachings on the Intermediate State." Once again, thanks to Diana J. Mukpo and the entire Mukpo family for supporting the publication of the work of Chögyam Trungpa. Thanks to Kendra Crossen Burroughs at Shambhala for her attentive and excellent editorial involvement in this project and to L. S. Summer for her index. I would also like to thank Judy Lief and Cheryl Campbell at Vajradhatu Publications for permission to reproduce both *Glimpses of Space* and *Secret Beyond Thought* in Volume Six. Finally, for the author himself, Chögyam Trungpa, yet another word of thanks hardly seems sufficient. As Volume Six reaches the end of the presentation of his Buddhist teachings now in print, it seems appropriate to offer a heartfelt Bravo! and to offer as well the aspiration that all sentient beings may benefit from this treasury of dharma and that it may help them to be happy and at their ease.

A BIOGRAPHY OF CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

THE VENERABLE CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA was born in the province of Kham in eastern Tibet in 1939. When he was just thirteen months old, Chögyam Trungpa was recognized as a major tulku, or incarnate teacher. According to Tibetan tradition, an enlightened teacher is capable, based on his or her vow of compassion, of reincarnating in human form over a succession of generations. Before dying, such a teacher may leave a letter or other clues to the whereabouts of the next incarnation. Later, students and other realized teachers look through these clues and, based on those plus a careful examination of dreams and visions, conduct searches to discover and recognize the successor. Thus, particular lines of teaching are formed, in some cases extending over many centuries. Chögyam Trungpa was the eleventh in the teaching lineage known as the Trungpa Tulkus.

Once young tulkus are recognized, they enter a period of intensive training in the theory and practice of the Buddhist teachings. Trungpa Rinpoche, after being enthroned as supreme abbot of Surmang Monastery and governor of Surmang District, began a period of training that would last eighteen years, until his departure from Tibet in 1959. As a Kagyü tulku, his training was based on the systematic practice of meditation and on refined theoretical understanding of Buddhist philosophy. One of the four great lineages of Tibet, the Kagyü is known as the practicing (or practice) lineage.

At the age of eight, Trungpa Rinpoche received ordination as a novice monk. Following this, he engaged in intensive study and practice of the traditional monastic disciplines, including traditional Tibetan poetry and

monastic dance. His primary teachers were Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen and Khenpo Gangshar—leading teachers in the Nyingma and Kagyü lineages. In 1958, at the age of eighteen, Trungpa Rinpoche completed his studies, receiving the degrees of kyorpön (doctor of divinity) and khenpo (master of studies). He also received full monastic ordination.

The late 1950s were a time of great upheaval in Tibet. As it became clear that the Chinese communists intended to take over the country by force, many people, both monastic and lay, fled the country. Trungpa Rinpoche spent many harrowing months trekking over the Himalayas (described later in his book *Born in Tibet*). After narrowly escaping capture by the Chinese, he at last reached India in 1959. While in India, Trungpa Rinpoche was appointed to serve as spiritual adviser to the Young Lamas Home School in Delhi, India. He served in this capacity from 1959 to 1963.

Trungpa Rinpoche's opportunity to emigrate to the West came when he received a Spaulding sponsorship to attend Oxford University. At Oxford he studied comparative religion, philosophy, history, and fine arts. He also studied Japanese flower arranging, receiving a degree from the Sogetsu School. While in England, Trungpa Rinpoche began to instruct Western students in the dharma, and in 1967 he founded the Samye Ling Meditation Center in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. During this period, he also published his first two books, both in English: *Born in Tibet* (1966) and *Meditation in Action* (1969).

In 1968 Trungpa Rinpoche traveled to Bhutan, where he entered into a solitary meditation retreat. While on retreat, Rinpoche received[1] a pivotal text for all of his teaching in the West, "The Sadhana of Mahamudra," a text that documents the spiritual degeneration of modern times and its antidote, genuine spirituality that leads to the experience of naked and luminous mind. This retreat marked a pivotal change in his approach to teaching. Soon after returning to England, he became a layperson, putting aside his monastic robes and dressing in ordinary Western

1. In Tibet, there is a well-documented tradition of teachers discovering or "receiving" texts that are believed to have been buried, some of them in the realm of space, by Padmasambhava, who is regarded as the father of Buddhism in Tibet. Teachers who find what Padmasambhava left hidden for the beings of future ages, which may be objects or physical texts hidden in rocks, lakes, and other locations, are referred to as tertöns, and the materials they find are known as terma. Chögyam Trungpa was already known as a tertön in Tibet.

attire. In 1970 he married a young Englishwoman, Diana Pybus, and together they left Scotland and moved to North America. Many of his early students and his Tibetan colleagues found these changes shocking and upsetting. However, he expressed a conviction that in order for the dharma to take root in the West, it needed to be taught free from cultural trappings and religious fascination.

During the seventies, America was in a period of political and cultural ferment. It was a time of fascination with the East. Nevertheless, almost from the moment he arrived in America, Trungpa Rinpoche drew many students to him who were seriously interested in the Buddhist teachings and the practice of meditation. However, he severely criticized the materialistic approach to spirituality that was also quite prevalent, describing it as a "spiritual supermarket." In his lectures, and in his books *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (1973) and *The Myth of Freedom* (1976), he pointed to the simplicity and directness of the practice of sitting meditation as the way to cut through such distortions of the spiritual journey.

During his seventeen years of teaching in North America, Trungpa Rinpoche developed a reputation as a dynamic and controversial teacher. He was a pioneer, one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers in North America, preceding by some years and indeed facilitating the later visits by His Holiness the Karmapa, His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and many others. In the United States, he found a spiritual kinship with many Zen masters, who were already presenting Buddhist meditation. In the very early days, he particularly connected with Suzuki Roshi, the founder of Zen Center in San Francisco. In later years he was close with Kobun Chino Roshi and Bill Kwong Roshi in Northern California; with Maezumi Roshi, the founder of the Los Angeles Zen Center; and with Eido Roshi, abbot of the New York Zendo Shobo-ji.

Fluent in the English language, Chögyam Trungpa was one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teachers who could speak to Western students directly, without the aid of a translator. Traveling extensively throughout North America and Europe, he gave thousands of talks and hundreds of seminars. He established major centers in Vermont, Colorado, and Nova Scotia, as well as many smaller meditation and study centers in cities throughout North America and Europe. Vajradhatu was formed in 1973 as the central administrative body of this network.

In 1974 Trungpa Rinpoche founded the Naropa Institute (now Naropa

University), which became the first and only accredited Buddhist-inspired university in North America. He lectured extensively at the institute, and his book *Journey without Goal* (1981) is based on a course he taught there. In 1976 he established the Shambhala Training program, a series of seminars that present a nonsectarian path of spiritual warriorship grounded in the practice of sitting meditation. His book *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (1984) gives an overview of the Shambhala teachings.

In 1976 Trungpa Rinpoche appointed Ösel Tendzin (Thomas F. Rich) as his Vajra Regent, or dharma heir. Ösel Tendzin worked closely with Trungpa Rinpoche in the administration of Vajradhatu and Shambhala Training. He taught extensively from 1976 until his death in 1990 and is the author of *Buddha in the Palm of Your Hand*.

Trungpa Rinpoche was also active in the field of translation. Working with Francesca Fremantle, he rendered a new translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which was published in 1975. Later he formed the Nalanda Translation Committee in order to translate texts and liturgies for his own students as well as to make important texts available publicly.

In 1979 Trungpa Rinpoche conducted a ceremony empowering his eldest son, Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, as his successor in the Shambhala lineage. At that time he gave him the title of Sawang ("Earth Lord").

Trungpa Rinpoche was also known for his interest in the arts and particularly for his insights into the relationship between contemplative discipline and the artistic process. Two books published since his death—*The Art of Calligraphy* (1994) and *Dharma Art* (1996)—present this aspect of his work. His own artwork included calligraphy, painting, flower arranging, poetry, playwriting, and environmental installations. In addition, at the Naropa Institute he created an educational atmosphere that attracted many leading artists and poets. The exploration of the creative process in light of contemplative training continues there as a provocative dialogue. Trungpa Rinpoche also published two books of poetry: *Mudra* (1972) and *First Thought Best Thought* (1983). In 1998 a retrospective compilation of his poetry, *Timely Rain*, was published.

Shortly before his death, in a meeting with Samuel Bercholz, the publisher of Shambhala Publications, Chögyam Trungpa expressed his interest in publishing 108 volumes of his teachings, to be called the Dharma Ocean Series. "Dharma Ocean" is the translation of Chögyam Trungpa's Tibetan teaching name, Chökyi Gyatso. The Dharma Ocean Series was

to consist primarily of material edited to allow readers to encounter this rich array of teachings simply and directly rather than in an overly systematized or condensed form. In 1991 the first posthumous volume in the series, *Crazy Wisdom*, was published, and since then another seven volumes have appeared.

Trungpa Rinpoche's published books represent only a fraction of the rich legacy of his teachings. During his seventeen years of teaching in North America, he crafted the structures necessary to provide his students with thorough, systematic training in the dharma. From introductory talks and courses to advanced group retreat practices, these programs emphasized a balance of study and practice, of intellect and intuition. *Trungpa* by Fabrice Midal, a French biography (forthcoming in English translation under the title *Chögyam Trungpa*), details the many forms of training that Chögyam Trungpa developed. Since Trungpa Rinpoche's death, there have been significant changes in the training offered by the organizations he founded. However, many of the original structures remain in place, and students can pursue their interest in meditation and the Buddhist path through these many forms of training. Senior students of Trungpa Rinpoche continue to be involved in both teaching and meditation instruction in such programs.

In addition to his extensive teachings in the Buddhist tradition, Trungpa Rinpoche also placed great emphasis on the Shambhala teachings, which stress the importance of meditation in action, synchronizing mind and body, and training oneself to approach obstacles or challenges in everyday life with the courageous attitude of a warrior, without anger. The goal of creating an enlightened society is fundamental to the Shambhala teachings. According to the Shambhala approach, the realization of an enlightened society comes not purely through outer activity, such as community or political involvement, but from appreciation of the senses and the sacred dimension of day-to-day life. A second volume of these teachings, entitled *Great Eastern Sun*, was published in 1999.

Chögyam Trungpa died in 1987, at the age of forty-seven. By the time of his death, he was known not only as Rinpoche ("Precious Jewel") but also as Vajracharya ("Vajra Holder") and as Vidyadhara ("Wisdom Holder") for his role as a master of the vajrayana, or tantric teachings of Buddhism. As a holder of the Shambhala teachings, he had also received the titles of Dorje Dradül ("Indestructible Warrior") and Sakyong ("Earth Protector"). He is survived by his wife, Diana Judith Mukpo, and

five sons. His eldest son, the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, succeeds him as the spiritual head of Vajradhatu. Acknowledging the importance of the Shambhala teachings to his father's work, the Sawang changed the name of the umbrella organization to Shambhala, with Vajradhatu remaining one of its major divisions. In 1995 the Sawang received the Shambhala title of Sakyong like his father before him and was also confirmed as an incarnation of the great ecumenical teacher Mipham Rinpoche.

Trungpa Rinpoche is widely acknowledged as a pivotal figure in introducing the buddhadharma to the Western world. He joined his great appreciation for Western culture with his deep understanding of his own tradition. This led to a revolutionary approach to teaching the dharma, in which the most ancient and profound teachings were presented in a thoroughly contemporary way. Trungpa Rinpoche was known for his fearless proclamation of the dharma: free from hesitation, true to the purity of the tradition, and utterly fresh. May these teachings take root and flourish for the benefit of all sentient beings.

BOOKS BY CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

Born in Tibet (George Allen & Unwin, 1966; Shambhala Publications, 1977)

Chögyam Trungpa's account of his upbringing and education as an incarnate lama in Tibet and the powerful story of his escape to India. An epilogue added in 1976 details Trungpa Rinpoche's time in England in the 1960s and his early years in North America.

Meditation in Action (Shambhala Publications, 1969)

Using the life of the Buddha as a starting point, this classic on meditation and the practice of compassion explores the six paramitas, or enlightened actions on the Buddhist path. Its simplicity and directness make this an appealing book for beginners and seasoned meditators alike.

Mudra (Shambhala Publications, 1972)

This collection of poems mostly written in the 1960s in England also includes two short translations of Buddhist texts and a commentary on the ox-herding pictures, well-known metaphors for the journey on the Buddhist path.

Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism (Shambhala Publications, 1973)

The first volume of Chögyam Trungpa's teaching in America is still fresh, outrageous, and up to date. It describes landmarks on the Buddhist path and focuses on the pitfalls of materialism that plague the modern age.

The Dawn of Tantra, by Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

Jointly authored by Chögyam Trungpa and Buddhist scholar Herbert V. Guenther, this volume presents an introduction to the Buddhist teachings of tantra.

Glimpses of Abhidharma (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

An exploration of the five skandhas, or stages in the development of ego, based on an early seminar given by Chögyam Trungpa. The final chapter on auspicious coincidence is a penetrating explanation of karma and the true experience of spiritual freedom.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo, translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1975)

Chögyam Trungpa and Francesca Fremantle collaborated on the translation of this important text by Guru Rinpoche, as discovered by Karma Lingpa, and are coauthors of this title. Trungpa Rinpoche provides a powerful commentary on death and dying and on the text itself, which allows modern readers to find the relevance of this ancient guide to the passage from life to death and back to life again.

The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation (Shambhala Publications, 1976)

In short, pithy chapters that exemplify Chögyam Trungpa's hard-hitting and compelling teaching style, this book explores the meaning of freedom and genuine spirituality in the context of traveling the Buddhist path.

The Rain of Wisdom (Shambhala Publications, 1980)

An extraordinary collection of the poetry or songs of the teachers of the Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, to which Chögyam Trungpa belonged. The text was translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee under the direction of Chögyam Trungpa. The volume includes an extensive glossary of Buddhist terms.

Journey without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha (Shambhala Publications, 1981)

Based on an early seminar at the Naropa Institute, this guide to the tantric teachings of Buddhism is provocative and profound, emphasizing both the dangers and the wisdom of the vajrayana, the diamond path of Buddhism.

The Life of Marpa the Translator (Shambhala Publications, 1982)
A renowned teacher of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition who combined scholarship and meditative realization, Marpa made three arduous journeys to India to collect the teachings of the Kagyü lineage and bring them to Tibet. Chögyam Trungpa and the Nalanda Translation Committee have produced an inspiring translation of his life's story.

First Thought Best Thought: 108 Poems (Shambhala Publications, 1983)
This collection consists mainly of poetry written during Chögyam Trungpa's first ten years in North America, showing his command of the American idiom, his understanding of American culture, as well as his playfulness and his passion. Some poems from earlier years were also included. Many of the poems from *First Thought Best Thought* were later reprinted in *Timely Rain.*

Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior (Shambhala Publications, 1984)
Chögyam Trungpa's classic work on the path of warriorship still offers timely advice. This book shows how an attitude of fearlessness and open heart provides the courage to meet the challenges of modern life.

Crazy Wisdom (Shambhala Publications, 1991)
Two seminars from the 1970s were edited for this volume on the life and teachings of Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, the founder of Buddhism in Tibet.

The Heart of the Buddha (Shambhala Publications, 1991)
A collection of essays, talks, and seminars presents the teachings of Buddhism as they relate to everyday life.

Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle (Shambhala Publications, 1991)
The mandala is often thought of as a Buddhist drawing representing tantric iconography. However, Chögyam Trungpa explores how both confusion and enlightenment are made up of patterns of orderly chaos

that are the basis for the principle of mandala. A difficult but rewarding discussion of the topic of chaos and its underlying structure.

Secret Beyond Thought: The Five Chakras and the Four Karmas (Vajradhatu Publications, 1991)

Two talks from an early seminar on the principles of the chakras and the karmas, teachings from the Buddhist tantric tradition.

The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra (Shambhala Publications, 1992)

An in-depth presentation of the nine yanas, or stages, of the path in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Particularly interesting are the chapters on visualization and the five buddha families.

Transcending Madness: The Experience of the Six Bardos (Shambhala Publications, 1992)

The editor of this volume, Judith L. Lief, calls it "a practical guide to Buddhist psychology." The book is based on two early seminars on the intertwined ideas of bardo (or the gap in experience and the gap between death and birth) and the six realms of being.

Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness (Shambhala Publications, 1993)

This volume presents fifty-nine slogans, or aphorisms related to meditation practice, which show a practical path to making friends with oneself and developing compassion for others, through the practice of sacrificing self-centeredness for the welfare of others.

Glimpses of Shunyata (Vajradhatu Publications, 1993)

These four lectures on principle of shunyata, or emptiness, are an experiential exploration of the ground, path, and fruition of realizing this basic principle of mahayana Buddhism.

The Art of Calligraphy: Joining Heaven and Earth (Shambhala Publications, 1994)

Chögyam Trungpa's extensive love affair with brush and ink is showcased in this book, which also includes an introduction to dharma art and a discussion of the Eastern principles of heaven, earth, and man as applied to the creative process. The beautiful reproductions of fifty-four

calligraphies are accompanied by inspirational quotations from the author's works.

Illusion's Game: The Life and Teaching of Naropa (Shambhala Publications, 1994)

The great Indian teacher Naropa was a renowned master of the teachings of mahamudra, an advanced stage of realization in Tibetan Buddhism. This book presents Chögyam Trungpa's teachings on Naropa's life and arduous search for enlightenment.

The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation (Shambhala Publications, 1995)

A simple and practical manual for the practice of meditation that evokes the author's penetrating insight and colorful language.

Dharma Art (Shambhala Publications, 1996)

Chögyam Trungpa was a calligrapher, painter, poet, designer, and photographer as well as a master of Buddhist meditation. Drawn from his many seminars and talks on the artistic process, this work presents his insights into art and the artist.

Timely Rain: Selected Poetry of Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 1998)

With a foreword by Allen Ginsberg, this collection of poems was organized thematically by editor David I. Rome to show the breadth of the poet's work. Core poems from *Mudra* and *First Thought Best Thought* are reprinted here, along with many poems and "sacred songs" published here for the first time.

Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala (Shambhala Publications, 1999)

This sequel and complement to *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* offers more heartfelt wisdom on Shambhala warriorship.

Glimpses of Space: The Feminine Principle and EVAM (Vajradhatu Publications, 1999)

Two seminars on the tantric understanding of the feminine and masculine principles, what they are and how they work together in vajra-

yana Buddhist practice as the nondual experience of wisdom and skillful means.

The Essential Chögyam Trungpa (Shambhala Publications, 2000)

This concise overview of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings consists of forty selections from fourteen different books, articulating the secular path of the Shambhala warrior as well as the Buddhist path of meditation and awakening.

Glimpses of Mahayana (Vajradhatu Publications, 2001)

This little volume focuses on the attributes of buddha nature, the development of compassion, and the experience of being a practitioner on the bodhisattva path of selfless action to benefit others.

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